

TRAP-18 and young people

Final report



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**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

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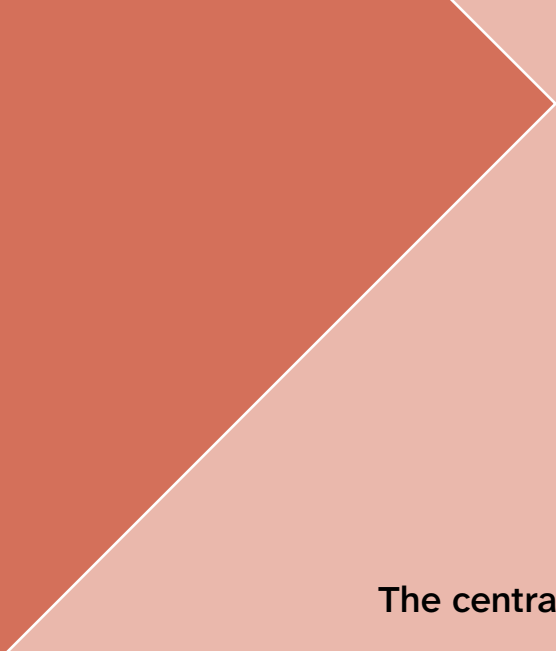
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1

Executive summary



The central objective of this research is to establish a comprehensive understanding of how the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol 18 (TRAP-18) applies to Australian young people (aged 14–25).

The research found that TRAP-18 is a useful instrument for the threat assessment of young people mobilising towards violence.

However, practitioners must account for distinct behavioural nuances within the younger population when undertaking threat assessment and threat management. Additionally, practitioners should be aware of the intent of the tool, particularly when assessing individuals who may operate in a group context.

While the research found that TRAP-18 is useful for assessing young people who are group actors, it requires contextualising the outcomes of some items differently.

Key Practitioner Takeaways

Based on the research findings, assessing young people using the TRAP-18 requires a nuanced understanding of several key developmental factors including the role of identity formation, cognitive and biological development, social relationships, logistical constraints, collecting behaviour, performativity, mental health and the online environment. Each of these is summarised below.

■ Identity Formation

Adolescence is a turbulent stage focused on forming a stable self-identity. This search for identity often manifests in specific ways in the context of violent extremism:

'Trying On' Identities: Young people often engage in highly performative behaviours, such as adopting digital warrior personas or pseudonyms, to test out extremist identities in online spaces. Undertaking identity development within online extremist subcultures may lead to a young person engaging in concerning behaviours.

Aesthetic Attraction: Younger individuals may be drawn to extremist identities for non-ideological reasons, such as the aesthetic of the movement, which helps them navigate the identity formation process, albeit in an unhealthy way. This may manifest as appearing to be a mixed or unclear ideology but potentially

reflects a concerning interest in extreme violence, as opposed to ideologically driven violent extremism.

Need for Recognition: Because their violence is often driven by emerging identity formation, young people may have a stronger need for others to recognise their message, resulting in ‘noisier’ communication patterns, including leakage and directly communicated threats.

■ Cognitive and Biological Development

The developmental stage of a young person impacts how they process the world and their emotions, including when they perceive there to be injustices:

Sensitivity to Injustice: Biological changes during adolescence can heighten an individual’s awareness of systemic unfairness, which extremist ideologies may then exploit. *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* strongly informed the creation of ideological views, though occasionally this worked in reverse.

Emotional and Cognitive Processing: Young people often feel the emotional impact of perceived injustices very strongly but may lack the cognitive and emotional maturity to process these complexities, making them more vulnerable to extremist influence.

■ Social Relationships

Social relationships are the primary vector through which young people view their own worth and identity. The online environment exposes young people to markedly more social influences than previous generations, some of which are potentially harmful. Violent extremist movements, and extreme violent subcultures, are increasingly operating in young people’s social spheres, potentially shaping their sense of self.

Shifting Social Priorities: Young people are often experimenting and moving between social groups. This may be interpreted as a potential instability in threat assessment, but this concern should be tempered by an understanding of normal adolescent development.

Social Motivations: Young people may drift into extremist activities primarily to maintain social belonging or familial bonds rather than out of deep ideological commitment. This does not lessen the threat they may pose but may influence how any threat needs to be managed, suggesting the need for an ecological case management approach.

Insecure Emerging Adulthood: Failures to achieve adult markers, such as stable employment or long-term intimate relationships, can both trigger and exacerbate feelings of instability and failure. This can lead to further isolation and grievance and the adoption of violent extremism as a maladaptive response.

■ **Logistical Constraints of Young People**

When a young person lacks the agency to act on significant (even if misdirected) goals, such as being prevented from travelling to a theatre of conflict due to parental refusal or an inability to apply for a passport, their imperative to act may shift to *Last Resort* behaviour, such as planning a local attack. Young people may demonstrate significant agency in overcoming limitations, such as manipulating parents to fund resources for a potential attack. Others showed relatively sophisticated technical skills and an ability to develop viable weapons despite their youth.

■ **The Role of Collecting**

For young people who feel socially alienated, collecting forbidden or taboo extremist materials can fulfil a psychological need for hidden knowledge. While this may not always indicate an imminent attack, nor necessarily indicate attack planning, it may represent an early stage of a potential pathway to violence where knowledge is being acquired for future use. The importance of collecting to a young person can also interact with neurodiversity, including autism.

■ **Performativity in Adolescents**

Adolescents (18 and younger) are significantly more 'noisy' than older cohorts in their communication of extremist intent (or language which implies intent). Therefore, they appear to engage more in leakage and threats. These behaviours are often identity-driven and performative, offering opportunities for early detection and diversion.

■ **Mental Health**


Adolescence is a developmental period when mental health concerns may be emerging but remain undiagnosed or misunderstood. Undiagnosed and untreated mental health issues may result in a young person attempting to manage their distress through unhealthy coping mechanisms. Violent extremist movements can (temporarily) fulfil this coping requirement. Within this research, the main mental health issues presenting in young people were depression and anxiety, reflecting those most commonly seen in the wider population of young people in Australia.

■ Ubiquity of Virtual Community

Dependence on the Virtual Community is nearly universal among younger people. Online engagement effectively substitutes for physical extremist group affiliation. Consequently, a lack of physical ties should not be interpreted as representing a lower threat level.

2

Introduction



The recently released CTVE Strategy and the Director-General of ASIO's recent annual threat assessment highlighted the issue of youth violent extremism and the increased likelihood of lone-actor terrorist attacks.¹ The Strategy identifies the need to improve approaches to youth violent extremism, including through early identification and intervention.² The ASIO threat assessment reflects the experiences of various government and policing agencies across Australia who have faced a rising number of young people coming to their attention.

To mitigate the threat of violent outcomes, law enforcement and security agencies utilise threat assessment protocols to assist in the identification and management of potential violent extremist actors and prioritise resources for investigation and threat management. The Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18) is one such protocol. TRAP-18 is a structured professional judgement tool that was initially developed for the assessment of individuals who potentially posed a risk of lone-actor terrorism, regardless of their ideological beliefs.³ Since its introduction in 2017, TRAP-18 has been subjected to extensive scientific testing and, based on the publication count, TRAP-18 is the most studied terrorism-specific threat assessment tool currently available. Some of these studies have used case studies of violent offenders to explore the utility and applicability of TRAP-18.⁴ Other, larger studies, have used TRAP-18 against datasets of violent offenders (mostly terrorists, but also other non-ideological mass killers) to explore both the utility and the validity of the tool.⁵ One study that surveyed Australian terrorism threat assessment practitioners

and academics found that TRAP-18 is largely considered a useful instrument for assessing lone-actor terrorist violence with some minor concerns about some of the individual items within the tool.⁶

However, relatively few studies specifically explore how applicable the TRAP-18 is to young people aged 25 years or younger. The largest available study of TRAP-18 from Meloy and Gill used a dataset of 111 lone-actor terrorists.⁷ A proportion of this sample was 25 years old and younger. However, the study did not specifically separate out young people as a distinct population for analysis. Other studies have looked at young people as either case studies or similarly included as part of a larger sample.⁸ As a result, the applicability of TRAP-18 to younger people is a standing question. This project seeks to shed further insight into the applicability of TRAP-18 when assessing young people and provide practical insight into the use of the tool for Australian assessment practitioners.

3

Methodology

Aims / research question(s)

1. To identify whether the TRAP-18 is a suitable protocol for assessing the threat of young people engaging in violent extremism.
2. To identify whether the TRAP-18 is applicable to the different ways that young people have engaged in violent extremism.
3. To provide guidance for Australian practitioners applying TRAP-18 to young people who are engaging with a variety of behaviours including different ideologies.

To evaluate whether the TRAP-18 is a suitable tool for identifying threats among young people, the research team employed a mixed-methods approach. This strategy combined statistical data with specific case studies to ensure the findings are grounded in both broad patterns and individual context. The study focused on Australian and New Zealanders between the ages of 14 and 25 to determine how threat behaviours manifest in this specific demographic, and how this is assessed using the TRAP-18.

Phase 1: Quantitative data collection

The first stage of the research involved a data-coding process. Data was drawn from the ASSP Database, a dataset that aims to record all publicly known individuals in Australia and New Zealand who have either been charged or

convicted of terrorism offences, or individuals who have been charged or convicted of non-terrorism offences but are otherwise involved in violent extremism.⁹ The ASSP Database, as of writing, contains 490 individuals. Within the dataset, 162 individuals 25 years old or younger were identified. Of these, 31 had insufficient data to code against the TRAP-18. The remaining 131 individuals were coded against the 18 distinct indicators of the TRAP-18 framework, plus 10 biographical, demographic, and event items.¹⁰ This process generated a total of 3668 unique datapoints. Each individual was assessed for the presence, absence, or unknown status of each TRAP-18 item. Additionally, the coders recorded the specific evidence and justification as to how that item outcome was determined using free text entry. The *Mental Disorder* distal characteristic for all coded individuals was coded by a forensic psychiatrist with expertise in both youth offending and countering violent extremism.

This dataset allowed the research team to establish a clear understanding of how frequently specific warning behaviours and distal characteristics appear in the Australian and New Zealand young violent extremist cohort.

Phase 2: Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using a variety of statistical techniques to identify patterns and differences across age, gender, and ideology. The statistical analysis utilised Chi-Square Tests to compare the frequency of individual indicators between different groups and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) tests to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the average total scores.

Following this, the team undertook a contextual synthesis to examine why certain indicator outcomes were present in the 18 and younger cohort compared

to the 19–25-year-old cohort. This included an interpretive process incorporating (1) a developmental contextualisation, (2) an analysis of the function of the behaviour, and (3) an analysis of how logistical constraints may impact behaviour. This enabled further insight relevant to using the TRAP-18 in the context of young people in the Australian threat environment.

Phase 3: Illustrative Case Studies

Following the statistical analysis and contextual synthesis, the researchers conducted a detailed analysis of five data-rich case studies. This qualitative phase provides a deeper understanding of the personal and social factors that numerical data may not fully capture. Because TRAP-18 was originally designed for adult lone-actor offenders, these case studies help identify where the protocol may need adjustment to account for the unique developmental stages of young people.

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Findings

Quantitative findings (statistical)

■ Item outcomes

The TRAP-18 coding sheet has three possible outcomes when coding an indicator – observed, absent, and unknown.¹¹ For clarity, observed outcomes meant that the criteria of the item were positively observed. Absent meant that there was sufficient information around the individual's behaviour that was contrary to an item's criteria. Finally, unknown meant that there was insufficient information to code the item either way.

Item incidence rates

Table 1. Heat table of item incidence rates across the dataset

Indicator	Observed	Absent	Unknown
1: Pathway	71.80%	2.30%	26.00%
2: Fixation	46.60%	2.30%	51.10%
3: Identification	77.10%	0.00%	22.90%
4: Novel Aggression	4.60%	17.60%	77.90%
5: Energy Burst	20.60%	7.60%	71.80%
6: Leakage	39.70%	9.20%	51.10%
7: Last Resort	19.10%	9.20%	71.80%
8: Directly Communicated Threat	12.20%	11.50%	76.30%
9: Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage	71.00%	0.00%	29.00%
10: Framed by an Ideology	87.00%	0.00%	13.00%
11: Failure to Affiliate	3.80%	65.60%	30.50%
12: Dependence on Virtual Community	73.30%	3.80%	22.90%
13: Thwarting of Occupational Goals	30.50%	24.40%	45.00%
14: Changes in Thinking and Emotion	67.20%	0.00%	32.80%
15: Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding	13.00%	27.50%	59.50%
16: Mental Disorder	35.10%	27.50%	37.40%
17: Creativity and Innovation	11.50%	14.50%	74.00%
18: History of Criminal Violence	20.60%	44.30%	35.10%

Note: Green = more prevalent, Red = less prevalent

Age

In total, 131 young people were coded. Of these, 37 are within the 18 and under category (min = 14, max = 18) and 94 are within the 19-25 category (min = 19, max = 25).

Figure 1. Age of POIs at Event

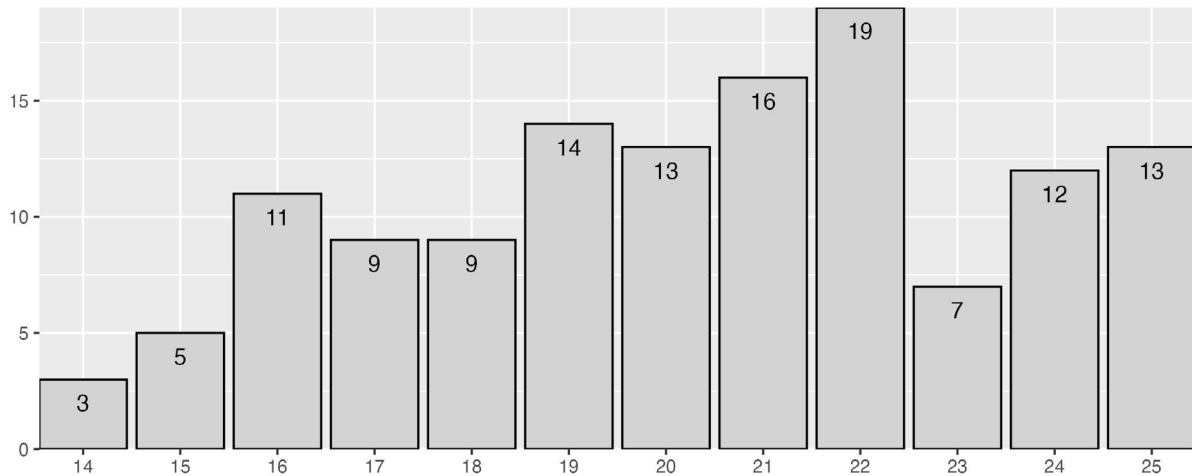
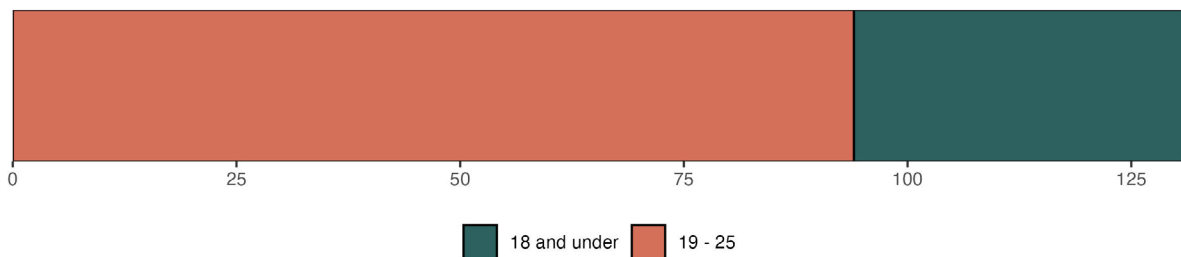


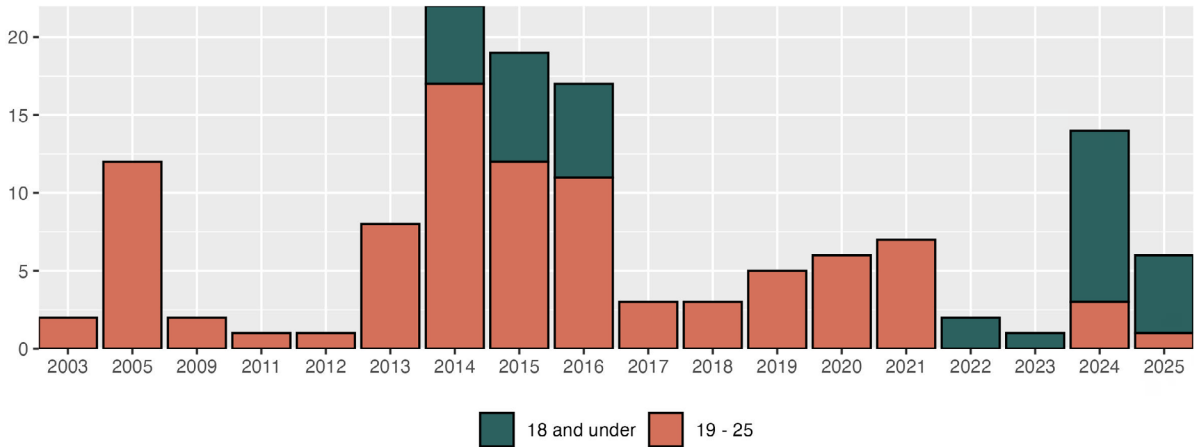
Figure 2. Count of POIs by Age Category at Event



A chronological analysis shows that the 19 and over cohort is consistently represented across the dataset, absent only between 2022 and 2023.

Involvement of those 18 and younger only occurs between 2014 and 2016 and 2022 and 2025. This suggests a surge in young people during the most active period of Islamic State, followed by a decline and subsequent re-emergence following COVID-19.

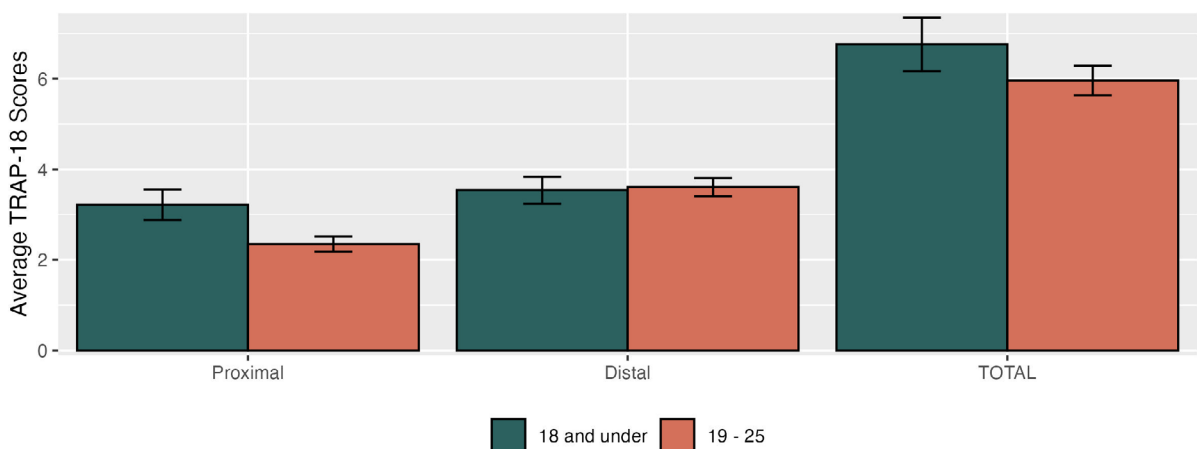
Figure 3. Yearly count of Age Category at Event



Total TRAP-18 Items

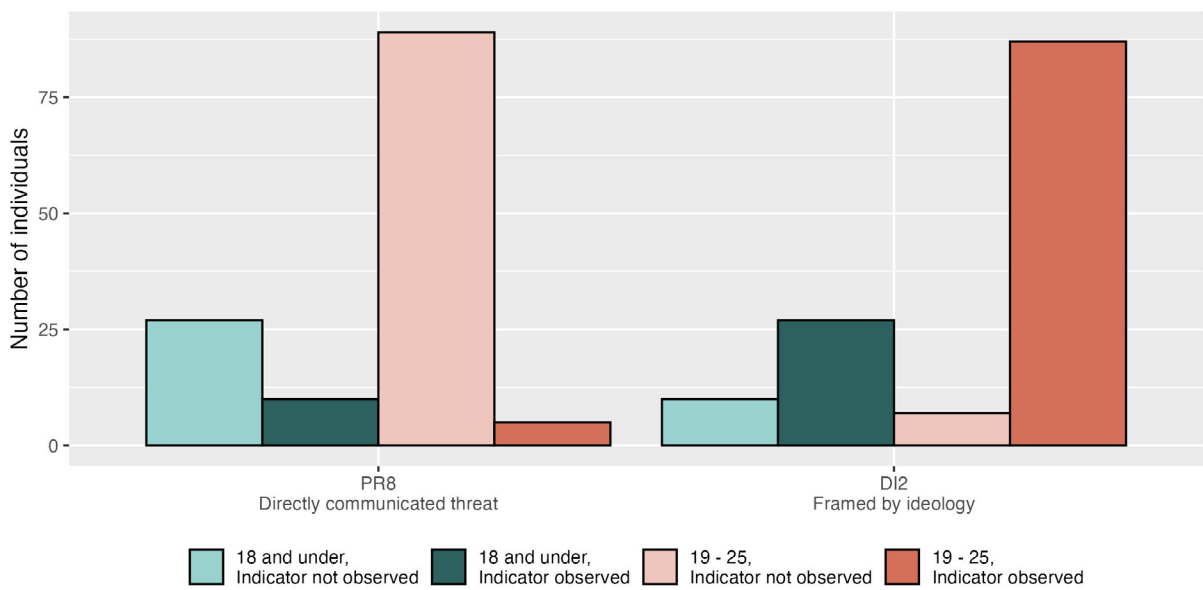
There is a significant difference in the number of observed TRAP-18 items between young adults (19-25) and those 18 and under, particularly in the proximal category. Those who were 18 and under at the time of the event had significantly more proximal indicators than those in young adulthood ($F = 6.58$, $p < .05$). There was no significant difference in the number of observed distal characteristics.

Figure 4. Average TRAP-18 items by Age Category at Event



Looking at differences in individual items, the findings demonstrate the 19-25 cohort is less likely to have the *Directly Communicated Threat* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=10.29, p < .01$) indicator than the 18 and younger cohort. Conversely, the 19-25 cohort is more likely to have the *Framed by an Ideology* characteristic observed than the 18 and younger cohort ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=7.36, p < .01$).

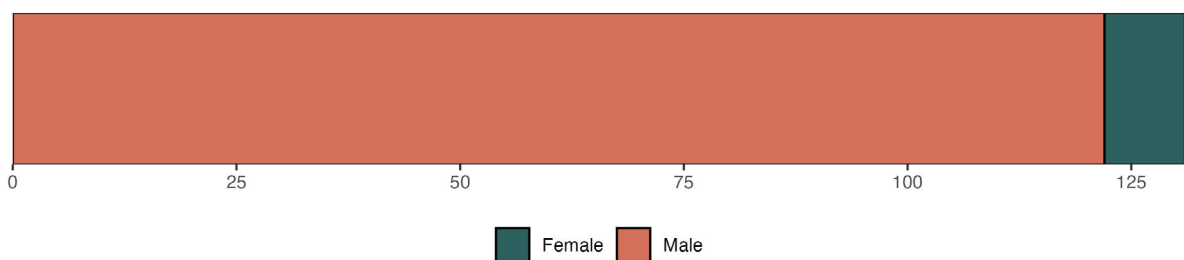
Figure 5. Counts of POIs with observed *Directly Communicated Threat* and *Framed by Ideology*, by Age Category at Event



Gender

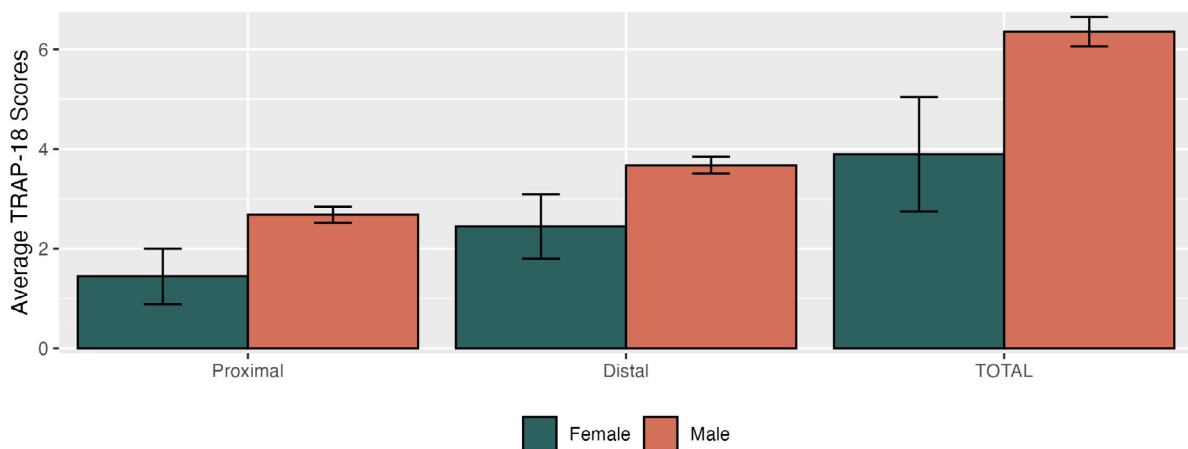
The vast majority of individuals in the dataset are male ($n = 122$), with only nine females.

Figure 6. Count of POIs by Gender



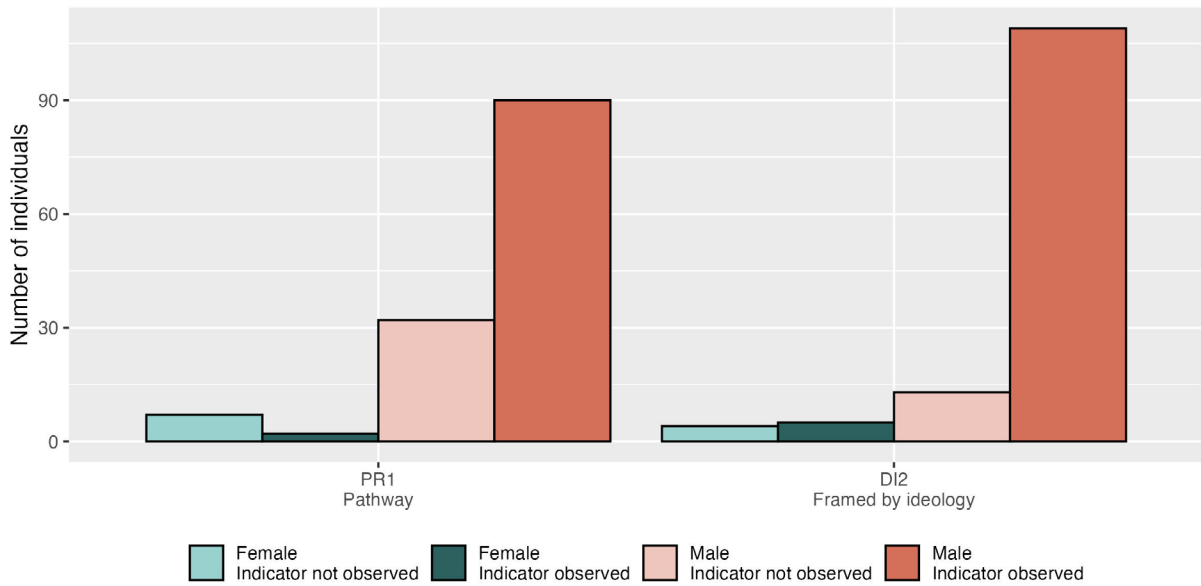
The analysis demonstrates a significant difference in the average number of total observed items and in the proximal category when comparing males and females. Males had more observed items ($F = 4.8, p < .05$) and proximal indicators ($F = 4.16, p < .05$) than females. There was no significant difference in the number of distal characteristics observed.

Figure 7. Average TRAP-18 items by Gender



In terms of individual items, Chi-Square Tests suggest that there are significant differences between males and females in two items. Males are more likely to have the *Pathway* warning behaviour as observed ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=8.33, p < .01$). Males are also more likely to have the *Framed by an Ideology* characteristic observed ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=5.75, p < .05$).

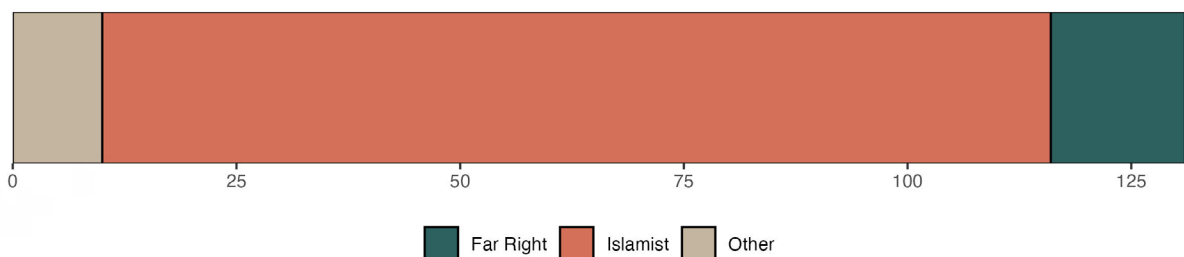
Figure 8. Count of *Pathway* and *Framed by Ideology* observed, by Gender



Ideology

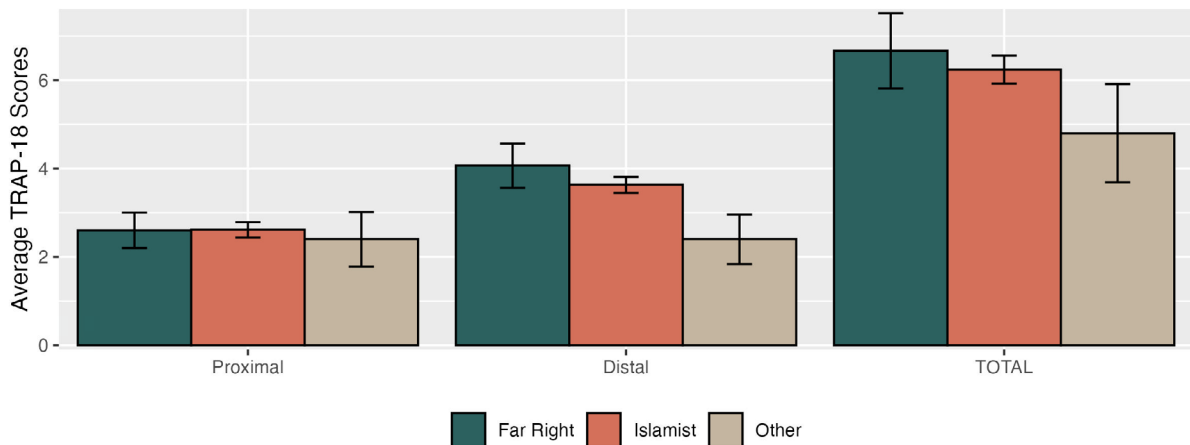
The majority of young people had an Islamist ideology (n = 106), followed by those with Far-Right ideology (n = 15). Those with an Other (10) ideology make up the remaining individuals in the dataset. This category describes individuals with unclear or mixed ideological motivations. Some of these motivations include violent incelism, anti-authority, and extreme conspiracy ideologies. The overwhelming number of individuals coded as being Islamists potentially reflects the number of individuals prosecuted for terrorism offences in Australia, and the level of data available for them reflecting the relative detail offered by court documents.

Figure 9. Count of POIs by Ideology



There were no significant differences between the number of items observed by individuals with different ideologies. This was true for total number of items observed, as well as for the proximal and distal categories.

Figure 10. Average number of TRAP-18 items by Ideology



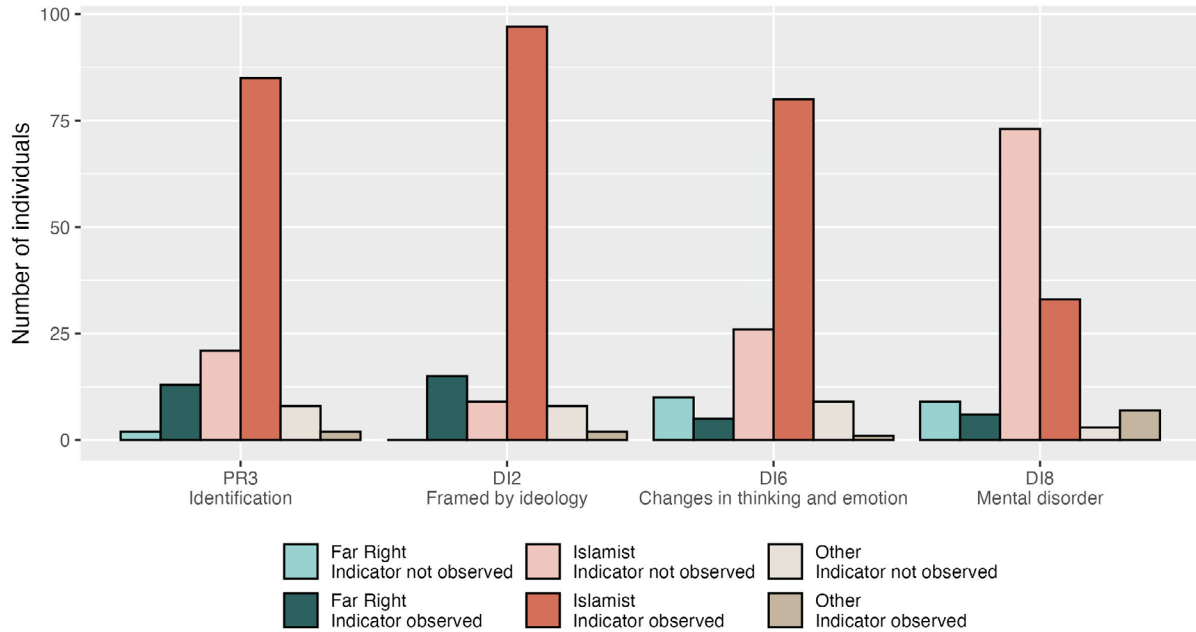
There were a number of significant differences on some individual items. The first was in *Identification*, where Islamist and Far-Right individuals were more frequently observed to display the behaviour than those in the Other category ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=19.33, p < .01$).

We also found a significant difference in the *Framed by an Ideology* characteristic, where again Islamist and Far-Right individuals had higher observations of this characteristic than those in the Other category ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=43.90, p < .01$).

Similarly, Islamist and Far-Right individuals had higher observations of the *Changes in Thinking and Emotion* characteristic than those in the Other category ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=25.21, p < .01$).

Finally, individuals in the Other category had proportionally higher observations of the Mental Disorder characteristic than those in the Far Right and Islamist ideology categories ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=6.24, p < .05$).

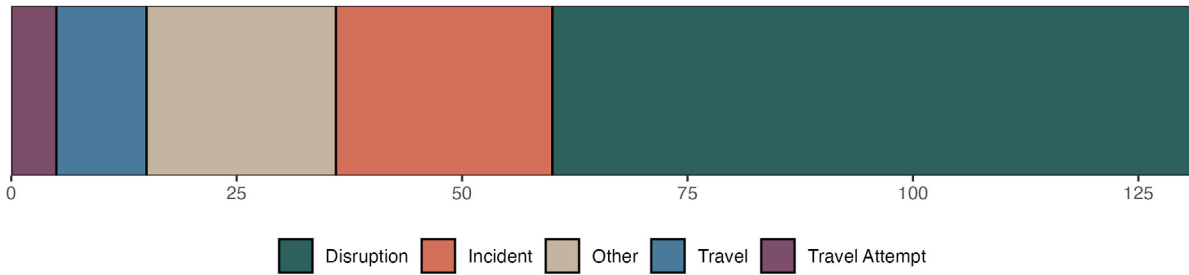
Figure 11. Count of POIs with observed *Identification, Framed by Ideology, Changes in Thinking and Emotion, and Mental Disorder, by Ideology*



Event Type

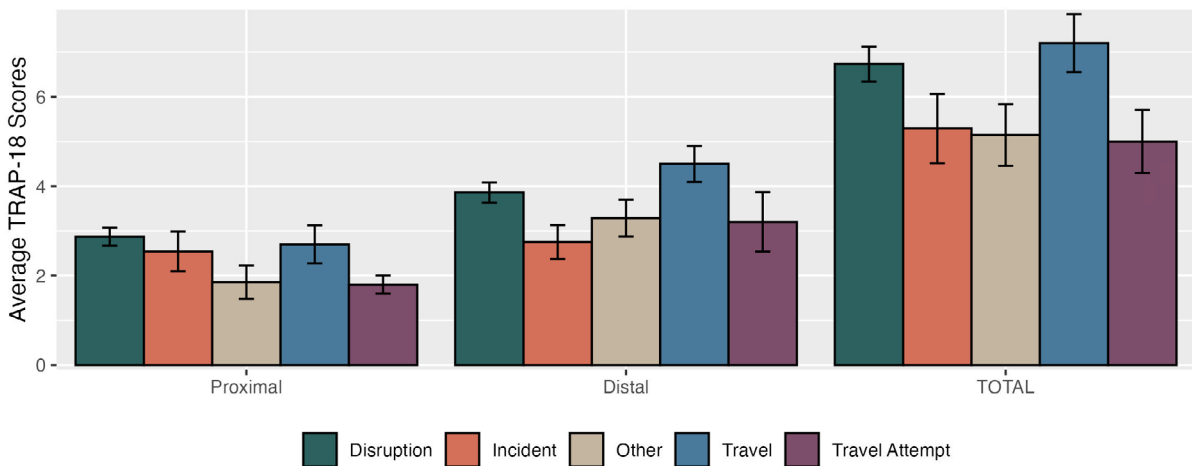
In terms of event type, the vast majority of individuals were disrupted ($n = 71$), while 24 were involved in an incident. Ten individuals successfully travelled overseas while five attempted to travel. Twenty-one individuals were classified as ‘Other’ for event type. This category captures individuals who have been subjected to some form of control order due to their involvement in violent extremism.

Figure 12. Count of POIs by Event Type



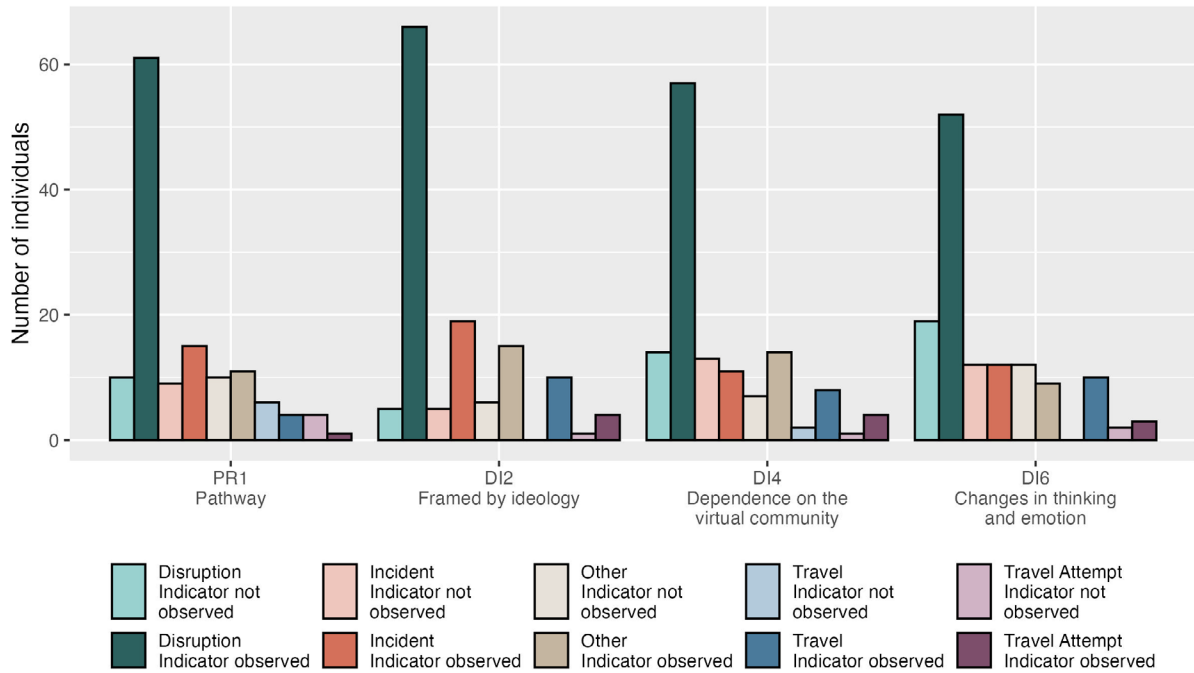
We found no significant differences between the average number of items observed across either the tool, proximal, or distal categories when comparing event types.

Figure 13. Average TRAP-18 items by Event Type



Those who were disrupted displayed the *Pathway* indicator more frequently ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=22.65, p < .01$). This was also true for the *Changes in Thinking and Emotion* characteristic ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=14.56, p < .01$), *Dependence on the Virtual Community* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=11.28, p < .05$), and the *Framed by Ideology* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=9.76, p < .05$) characteristics.

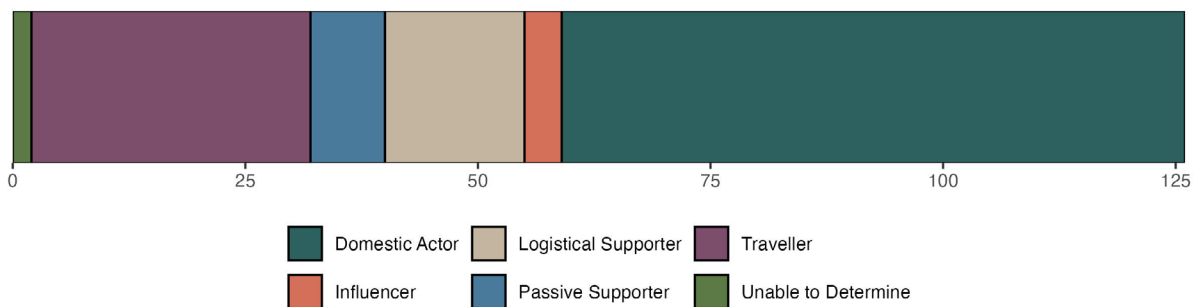
Figure 14. Count of POIs with observed Pathway, Framed by Ideology, Dependence on Virtual Community, Changes in Thinking and Emotion, by Event Type



Threat Type

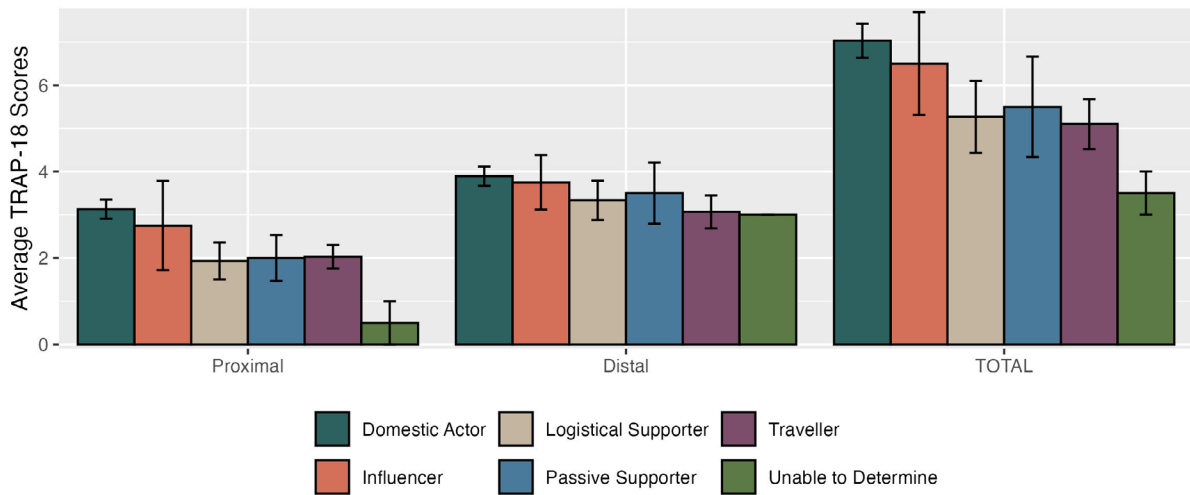
Within the dataset, the most prominent threat type are domestic actors (n = 66), followed by travellers (n = 30) and logistical supporters (n = 15). The remaining individuals are passive supporters (n = 8), influencers (n = 4), and unable to determine (n = 2).

Figure 15. Count of POIs by Threat Type



While the ANOVAs showed that there was a significant difference between the threat types, post-hoc analysis suggests that the difference between domestic actors and travellers is only trending towards significance ($p < .10$).

Figure 16. Average TRAP-18 items by Threat Types

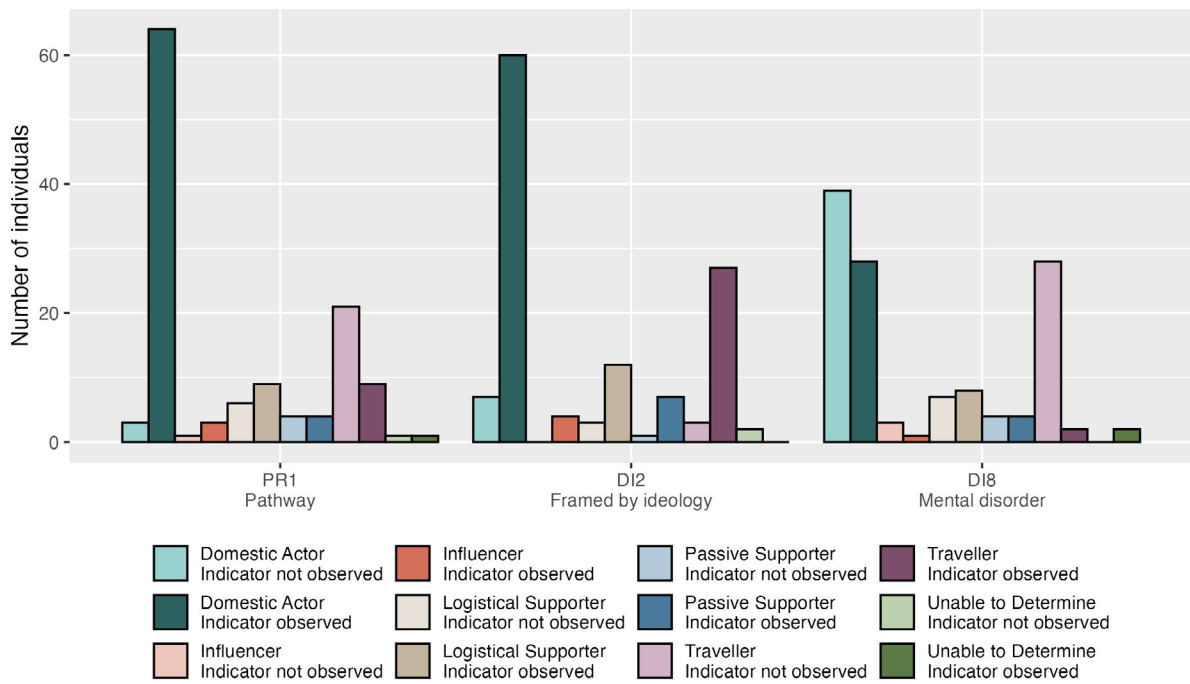


In individual items, we found a significant difference in the *Pathway* indicator ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=48.00, p < .01$), with domestic actors having higher observations of this indicator than other threat types. Conversely, travellers have lower observations of this indicator than other threat types.

We also found a significant difference in the *Framed by an Ideology* characteristic ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=15.17, p < .01$), with domestic actors again having the highest observation of this item.

Finally, we also found a significant difference in the *Mental Disorder* characteristic ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=17.96, p < .01$). Proportionally, travellers are the least likely to have this indicator observed. This may be the result of the poor data availability for many of these individuals.

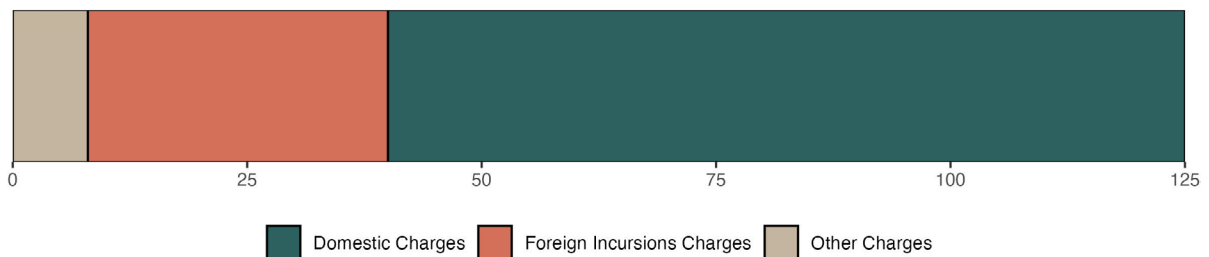
Figure 17. Count of POIs with observed *Pathway, Framed by Ideology, and Mental Disorder* items, by Threat Type



Charge Type

The individuals within the dataset were coded into a number of different charge types: Domestic charges, Foreign Incursion charges, and Other charges.

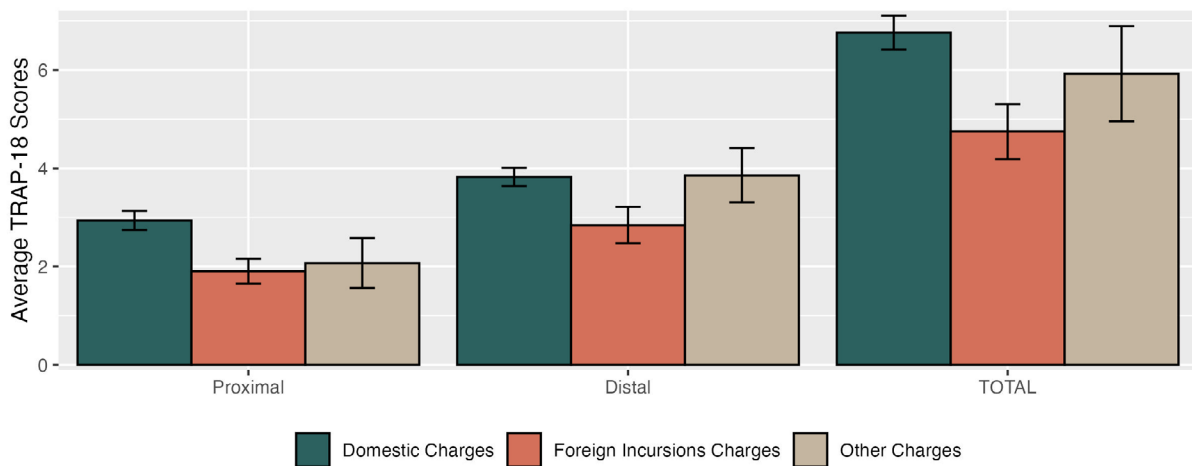
Figure 18. Count of POIs by Charge Type



The majority of individuals within the dataset were charged with Domestic offences charges (n = 85), followed by individuals charged with Foreign Incursion charges (n = 32), and those on Other charges (n = 14).

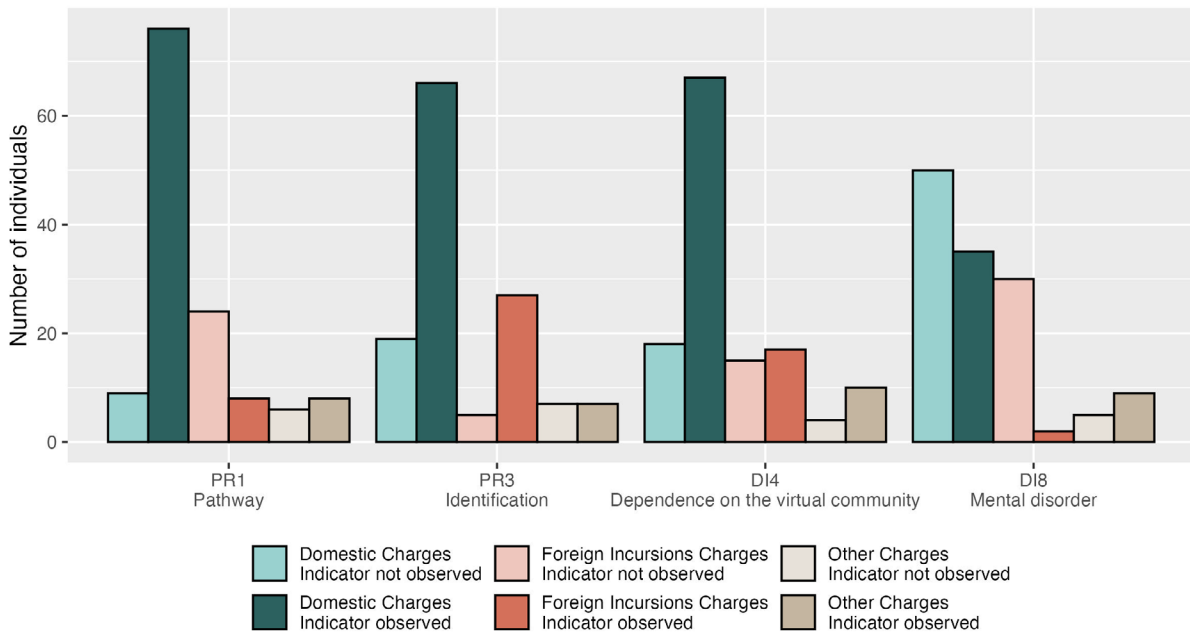
There were significant differences between individuals on domestic charges and those on foreign incursion charges. Those on domestic charges on average had higher proximal, distal, and total TRAP-18 scores than those on foreign incursion charges.

Figure 19. Average TRAP-18 items by Charge Type



There were also significant differences in a number of items: *Pathway*, *Identification*, *Dependence on the Virtual Community*, and *Mental Disorder*. Those charged with Domestic offences were more likely to have the *Pathway*, *Identification*, *Dependence on the Virtual Community* observed. Those on other charges have proportionally more observations of a mental health issue, whereas those on domestic and foreign incursion charges have proportionally more non-observations of mental health issues.

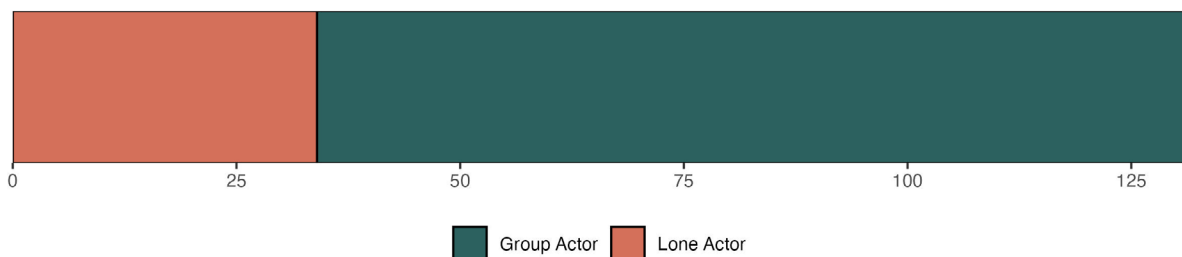
Figure 20. Count of POIs with observed *Pathway, Identification, Dependence on the Virtual Community, and Mental Disorder* items, by Charge Type



Lone Versus Group Actors

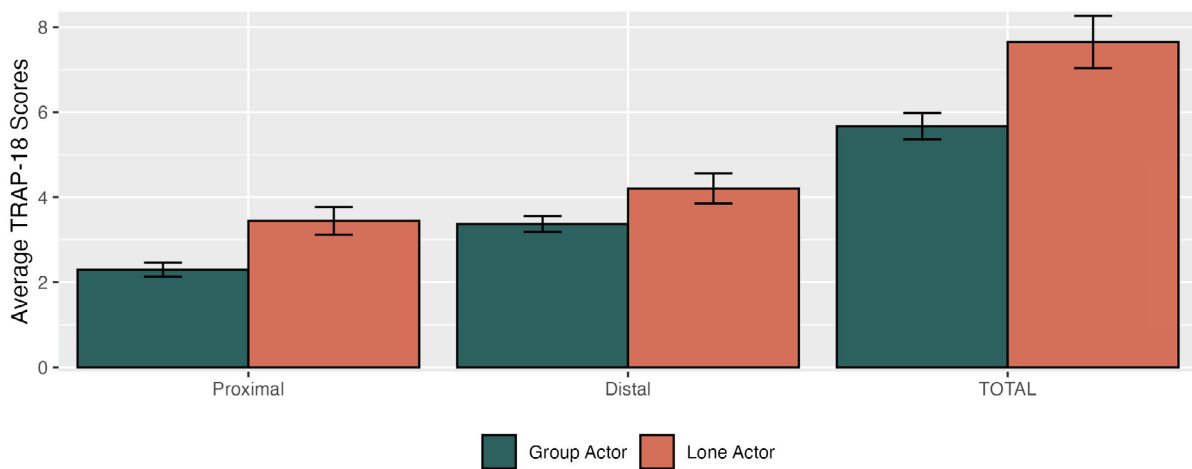
Within the dataset, 34 individuals were lone actors while 97 were group actors. The nature of the groups differed across the dataset. Some were large formal networks of individuals involved in plotting in a more traditional cell structure. Others were smaller groups of friends acting together. There were also a number of dyads and triads included. It is important to note that group status was determined by whether they operationally acted alone or in a group, in line with Spaaij’s definition of lone-actor terrorists.¹²

Figure 21. Count of POIs by Lone or Group Actor status



There are significant differences across the average number of observed items and in the proximal and distal categories, as well as in the average total TRAP-18 scores, when comparing lone actors against group actors. Lone actors had higher total ($F = 9.62, p < .01$), proximal ($F = 11.20, p < .01$), and distal ($F = 5.05, p < .05$) numbers of observed items.

Figure 22. Average TRAP-18 items observed by Lone or Group actor status



Within individual items, we found significant differences in the *Pathway* indicator, with Lone Actors having proportionally higher observations of this indicator ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=8.33, p < .01$). Group Actors have proportionally lower rates of observation for *Leakage* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=12.78, p < .01$) and *Directly Communicated Threat* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=5.10, p < .05$) indicators. Similarly, Group Actors also have proportionally lower observations of the *Mental Disorder* item ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=12.78, p < .01$) and *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding* characteristic ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=10.59, p < .01$). On the other hand, Group Actors had proportionally more observations of the *Framed by Ideology* indicator ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=5.88, p < .05$).

Figure 23. Count of POIs with observed *Pathway, Leakage, and Directly Communicated Threat* items, by Lone or Group actor status

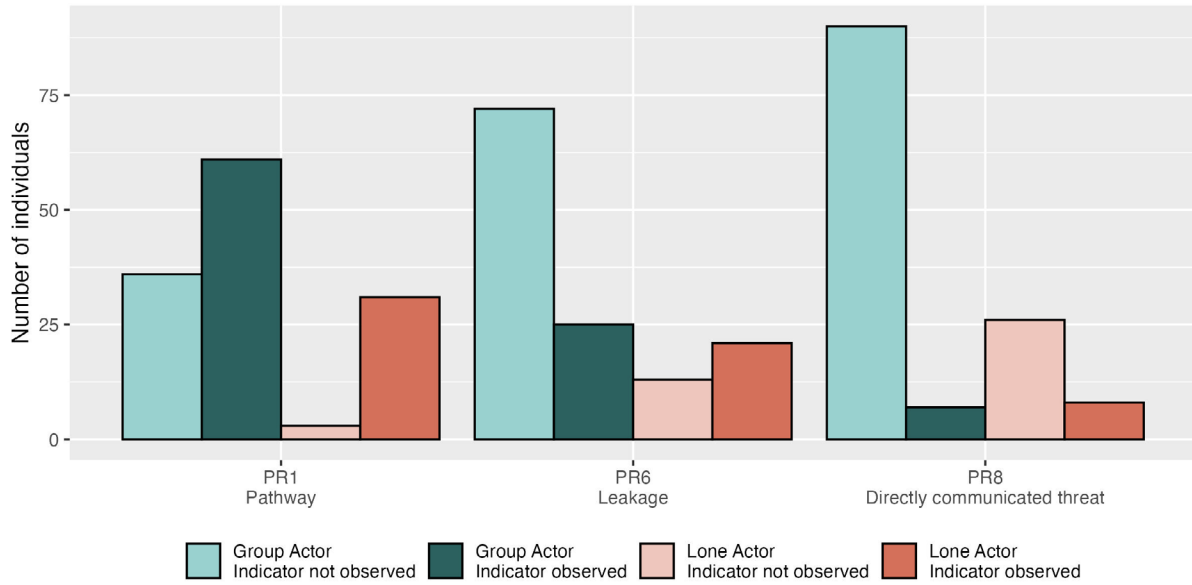
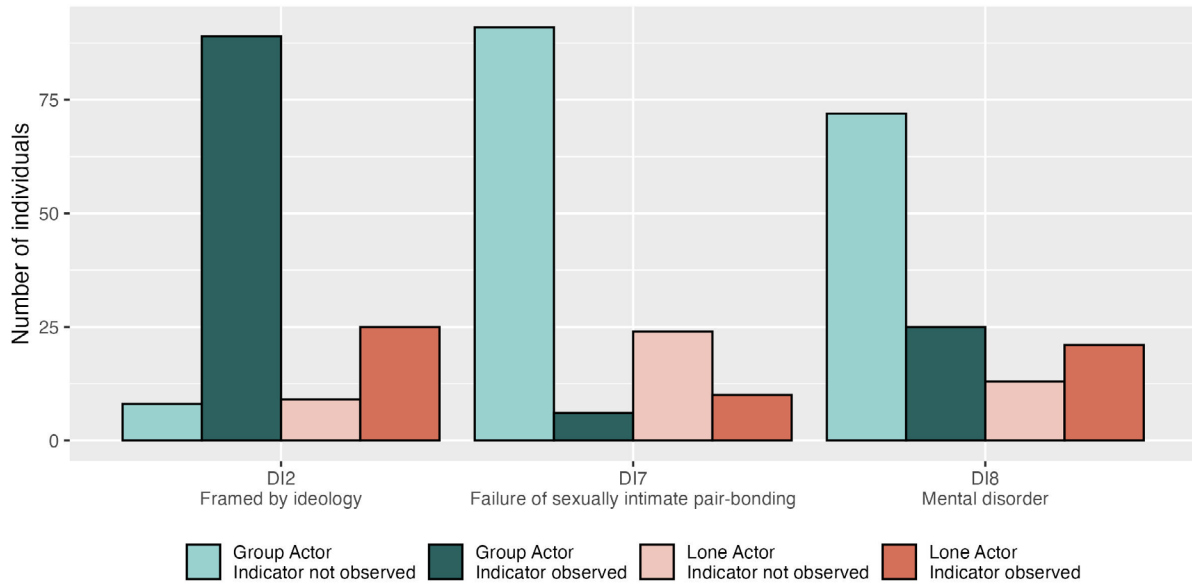


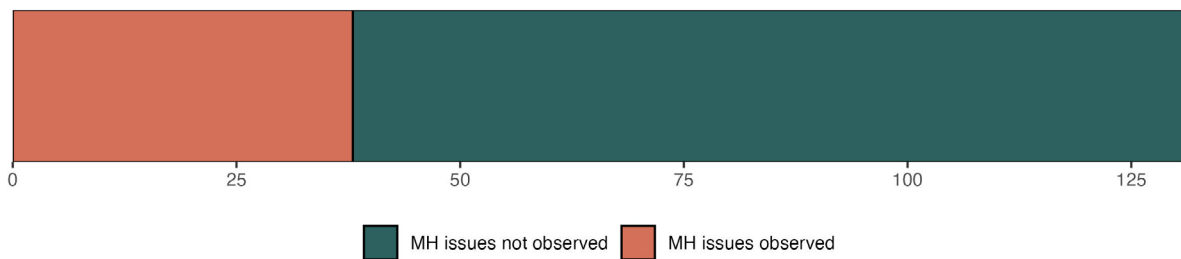
Figure 24. Count of POIs with observed *Framed by Ideology, Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding, and Mental Disorder*, by Lone or Group actor status



Mental Disorder

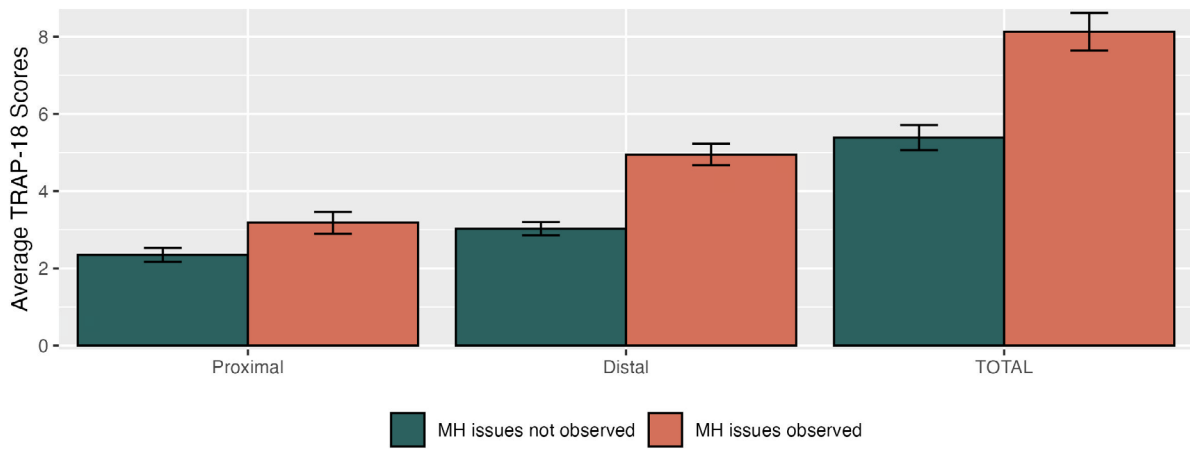
A total of 45 individuals had some form of mental health issue observed, including neurodiversity. TRAP-18 codes neurodiversity within the *Mental Disorder* characteristic. However, in this section, neurodiversity has been disaggregated from the general mental disorder findings presented previously to focus on non-neurodiversity related mental disorders. Neurodiversity is examined more closely in the following section. Excluding neurodiversity, 35 individuals had some form of observed mental health issue. The most commonly observed conditions were depression and anxiety (each 14), followed by substance use (9), PTSD (7), and personality disorder (7)¹³. It is important to note that mental health issues were only coded if they were present before the individual was arrested or charged – the development of mental health issues like depression due to their presence in custody was not considered to be relevant to the TRAP-18 coding.

Figure 25. Count of POIs with a recorded mental health concern (excluding neurodiversity)



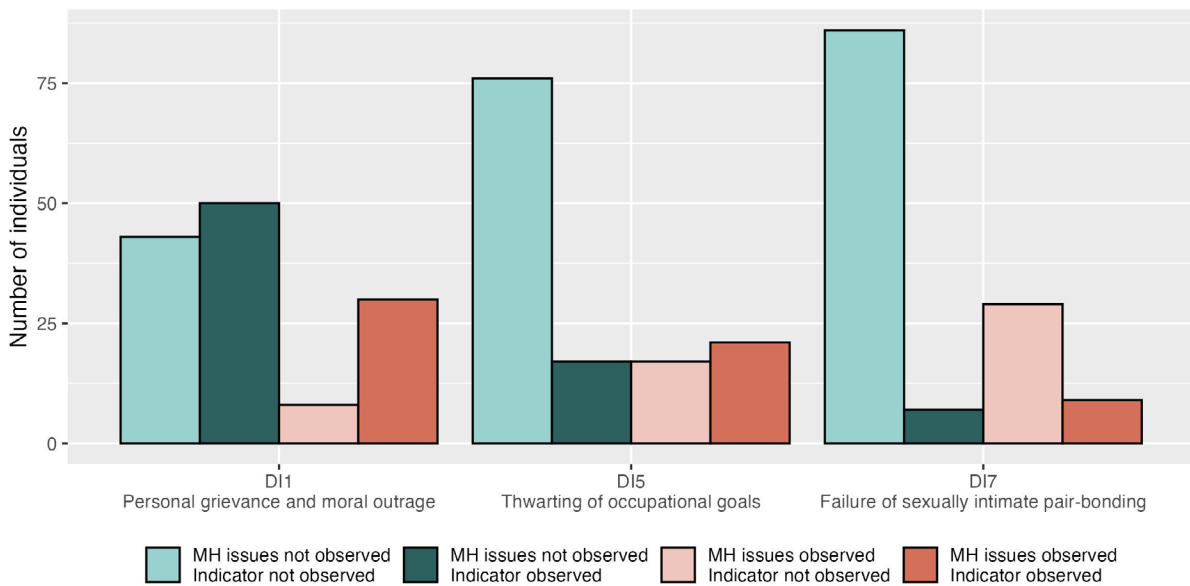
There are significant differences in TRAP-18 scores when comparing those with and without mental health issues. Those with observed mental health issues had higher total ($F = 21.60, p < .001$), proximal ($F = 6.12, p < .05$), and distal ($F = 34.80, p < .001$) scores.

Figure 26. Average TRAP-18 items observed between those with or without mental health concerns



Individuals with mental health issues had proportionally higher rates of the *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=6.18, p < .05$) item. Those with mental health issues had proportionally lower observations of the *Thwarting of Occupational Goals* characteristic ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=12.17, p < .01$) and the *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding* characteristic ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=5.15, p < .01$).

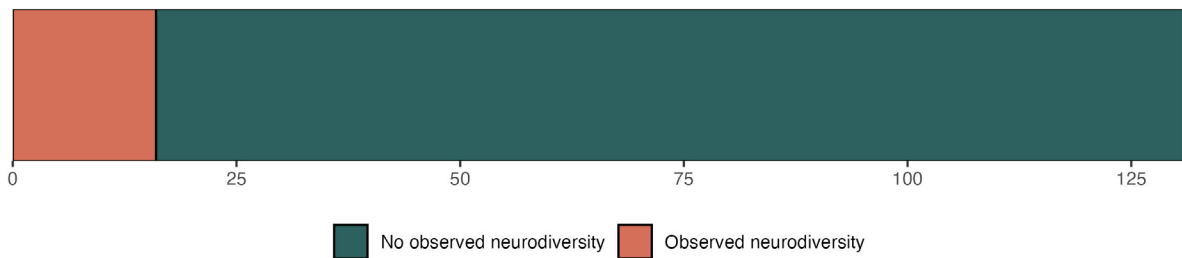
Figure 27. Count of POIs with observed *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*, *Thwarting of Occupational Goals*, and *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding*, by those with or without mental health concerns



Neurodiversity

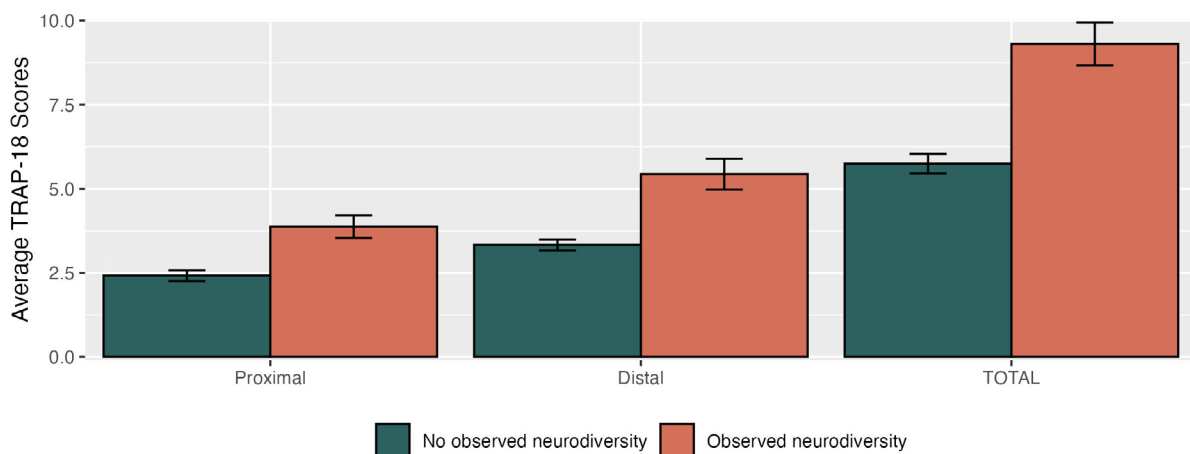
A total of 16 individuals had an observed neurodiversity. Fourteen had autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and six had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).¹⁴

Figure 28. Count of POIs with a recorded neurodiversity



Those with observed neurodiversity had higher total ($F = 18.6, p < .001$), proximal ($F = 10.1, p < .001$), and distal ($F = 19.90, p < .001$) scores.

Figure 29. Average TRAP-18 items between those with or without an observed neurodiversity



Those without a neurodiversity had lower observations of the *Leakage* item ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=4.71, p < .05$), *Thwarting of Occupational Goals* characteristic

($\chi^2(1, n=131)=5.15, p < .05$), *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=4.30, p < .05$), and (non-neurodiverse) *Mental Disorders* ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=30.51, p < .01$). Those who did not have a neurodiversity also had higher observations of the *Pathway* indicator ($\chi^2(1, n=131)=6.19, p < .05$).

Figure 30. Count of POIs with observed *Pathway* and *Leakage* items, by those with or without an observed neurodiversity

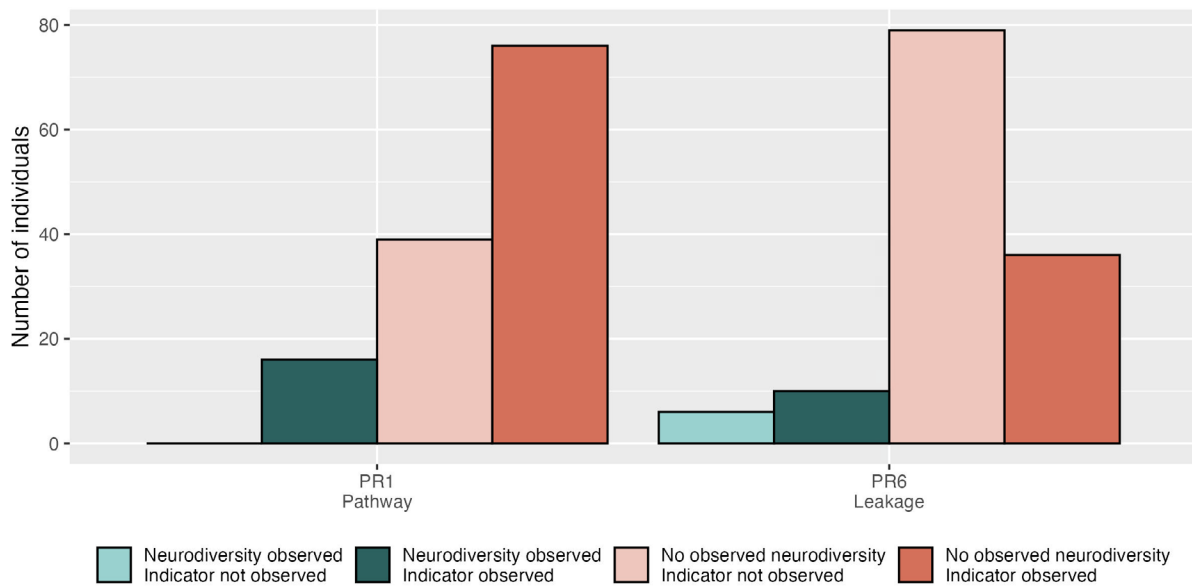
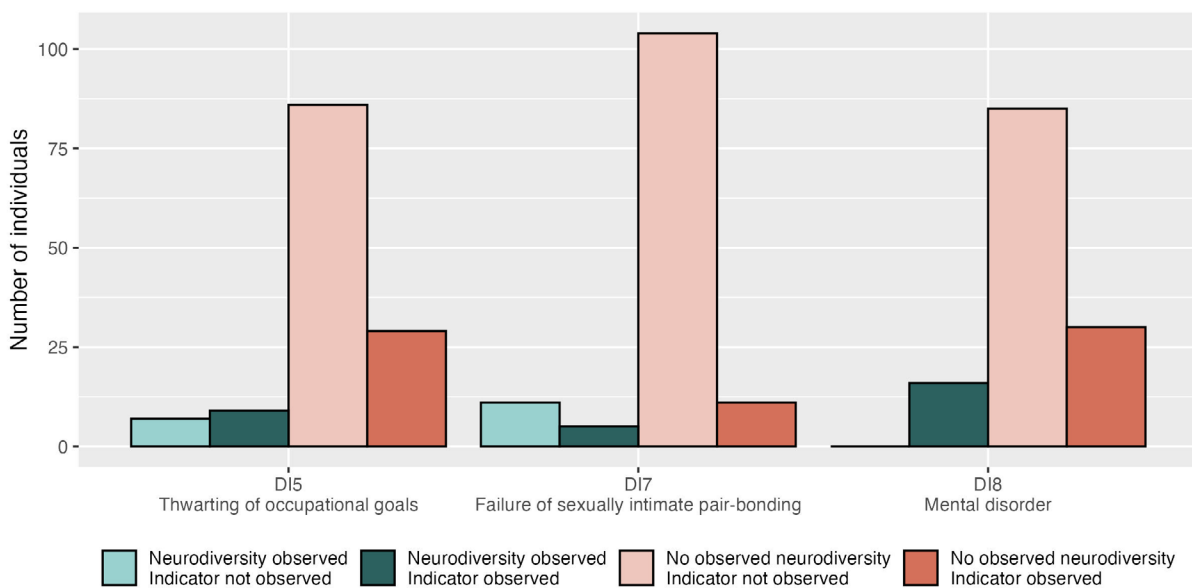
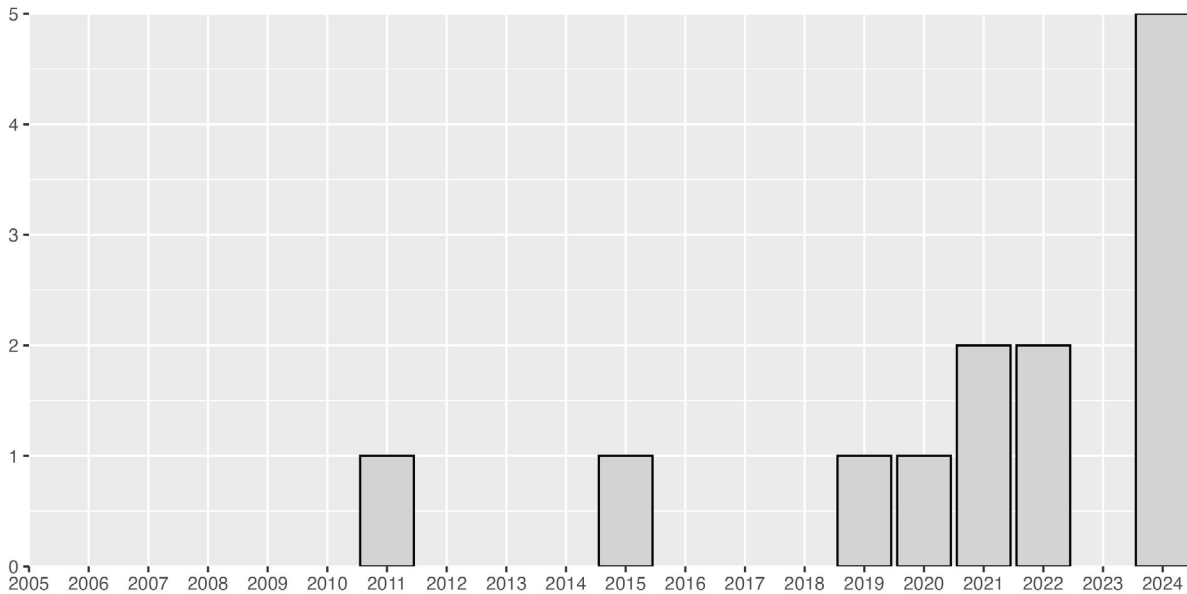


Figure 31. Count of POIs with observed *Thwarting of Occupational Goals*, *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding* and *Mental Disorder* items, by those with or without an observed neurodiversity



A final consideration was when individuals with ASD appear in the dataset.

Figure 32. Count of POIs with diagnosed ASD by year



One of the assumptions held before undertaking this research was that there would be a link between neurodiversity (particularly ASD) and the collection of violent extremist materials, and this would be reflected in the higher number of neurodiverse young people observed in the period since the introduction of federal legislation prohibiting the accessing and possession of violent extremist material. Somewhat unexpectedly, the kind of offending captured here does not seem to be primarily driven by the change in legislation. Rather, with a few exceptions, the individuals with ASD were mostly involved in an act of intended violence. The implications of this are discussed in the following section.

Quantitative findings (contextual synthesis)

This section further discusses the findings of the study by contextualising the individual TRAP-18 items and their relevance to the assessment of young people. It builds on some of the statistics presented in the previous section and explores the links and potential interactions between different TRAP-18 items. Additionally, this section discusses the process of coding each item and relevant potential considerations for users of the tool. By doing so, this section enables further insights relevant to using the TRAP-18 in Australia when assessing young people.

■ Proximal Indicators

Pathway

A total of 71.8% of individuals captured in the database engaged in *Pathway* behaviours. Broadly, the *Pathway* behaviours observed are not unique to young people. This is because the indicator is concerned with behaviours that any individual, younger or otherwise, must perform to engage in violence, whether the attack is operationally complex and well-planned or an act of low-capacity violence. Accordingly, many young people in the dataset engaged in these behaviours – some to the point of carrying out an attack. Young people conducted research into their targets, engaged in sophisticated planning, and obtained weapons ranging from simple kitchen knives to sourcing firearms. Older cohorts above 18 years old typically engaged in more sophisticated *Pathway* behaviours, though this is perhaps because this cohort also contained a higher number of group-based plots, which tended towards more complex operations.

However, the high percentage of *Pathway* behaviours being observed is not surprising given the broad nature of this indicator, which not only captures behaviours that immediately precede an attack, but also behaviours that occur relatively early on, such as research and planning. The latter two behaviours are particularly important to note. Many of the young people are present in the dataset because they were found to be collecting violent extremist material (the passive supporter offender type previously mentioned). This material is often instructional in nature, describing how to create or use specific weapons (such as creating explosives, using knives, and so on). Within a younger cohort, it is often not clear that the intent behind gathering this material is for the purpose of enabling an attack as compared to simply collecting the material because of its perceived value as transgressive and forbidden media.

Young people prepare for attacks in the same way as older perpetrators.

Collecting behaviours are not limited to young people, with collecting (including of digital items) being a way for individuals to assert their identity.¹⁵ Collecting can also be a feature of childhood development, with children engaging in collecting behaviours from as early as five years old. From around 12 years old, collecting interests shift to more complex themes, often mediated by social relationships and the individual's perceived place in society.¹⁶ For young people who feel socially alienated, the collection of taboo and forbidden items such as violent extremist material can serve an important emotional need, providing a sense that they have knowledge that others do not. This hidden knowledge can provide a sense of psychological superiority to others around them.

However, this collecting behaviour does pose a challenge for coding the *Pathway* indicator. When is the possession of violent extremist materials limited to collecting behaviours, and when is it an indication of a shift towards violence? The nature of violent extremist material can exacerbate this challenge. If a young person downloads a magazine from the Islamic State, did they download it because they like collecting Islamic State material, or did they do it because that issue had instructions for carrying out attacks on Christian churches? Absent an interview with the individual themselves, it may be difficult to determine the specific cause and intent behind this behaviour. As such, for a young person collecting violent extremist material should be considered to represent the early stages of a *potential* mobilisation to violence. Put differently, even if a young person collects concerning material purely for non-attack purposes, there is the potential for this knowledge to be used in the future.

Regardless of why a young person engages in the collection of violent extremist material, if the material has potential utility as research or planning for an act of violence, it should be recorded under the *Pathway* proximal indicator.

Collecting behaviour should also be considered in relation to other proximal indicators, such as *Identification* and *Fixation*. Distal characteristics may also provide insight into why an individual has engaged in collecting behaviour around a particular topic. For example, a young person's neurodiverse status may provide an important contextual explanation for the *Pathway* behaviour.

Distal characteristics may provide important contextual information for why young people are engaging in *Pathway* behaviours.

It is also important to note that while the presence of a *Pathway* behaviour is concerning, it is not necessarily an indication that the individual would be effective at being violent. This is not to say that this behaviour should be discounted. Rather, *Pathway* behaviour should be contextualised with the individual's previous experiences of violence, as well as the resources and other capabilities that they may possess.

Fixation

Fixation is defined as an increasingly pathological preoccupation with a person or a cause, accompanied by a deterioration in social or occupational life. *Fixation* was observed across 46.60% of the dataset.

Fixation strongly correlated with *Leakage* behaviour ($r = .42, p < .001$). This makes intuitive sense – if an individual is fixated to the extent that their over-valued interests start creeping into their social relations, *Leakage* is likely to occur. This speaks to the tendency for young people to be performative in both their identity and their interests. They may need to let others know who they are and what they believe, and that they are serious about their interests.

Young people tend to be performative in relation to their beliefs. If they are fixated on a particular topic, they are likely to let others know about their intent.

Fixation can be difficult to determine as it requires a corresponding social degradation or decline. Observing this can be challenging, particularly if an individual's baseline cannot be established. This may be because there is a lower level of evidence available due to their young age, or because the individual's baseline is also socially degraded, but not necessarily because of the *Fixation*. This can lead to situations where a *Fixation* on an ideology or material is present, but the indicator cannot be observed because there is no corresponding social or functional decline.

This is an issue that can impact on the assessment of an individual of any age group, but it appears to be more acute with young people. Largely, this may be because young people may have less of a social baseline due to their young age. As a result, there are several young people in the dataset who appear to have a strong, unhealthy interest in a violent extremist topic, but do not appear to have the social disjunction *because* of the interest. Put differently, it is difficult to determine whether the young person became fixated because of their isolation or became isolated because of their *Fixation*. Moreover, both processes can be true at the same time – isolation can lead to interest, which can lead to further isolation, and vice versa.

Because of this, the presence of *social disjunction* should not be treated as a hard coding requirement for *Fixation* to be present in young people. It is a highly salient feature when present. However, if a young person is showing a level of *Fixation* and a level of social difficulty, this arguably fulfils the spirit of the item.

If a young person is demonstrating fixated behaviour and their social relationships are deteriorating for whatever reason, Fixation should be recorded. Requiring the *Fixation* to specifically require demonstrated social disjunction is not possible for many young people.

Alternatively, a significant sub-set of young people displayed *Fixation* with an ideology but did not experience social decline. In contrast, they actually made social connections around these intense interests. This was particularly true of many group-based actors. However, this also applied to young people acting alone. In an inversion of the manual's articulation of the item (where *Fixation* causes social disjunction), *Fixation* instead became a connecting thread between different young people. It is still possible to code for *Fixation* if there is social or functional disjunction with others outside this limited group. This disjunction is typically reported by family members who report arguments with the young person over their activities or views. However, absent this kind of conflict, it is difficult to code this indicator if there are strong group links. This is a logical result of TRAP-18's origins as a tool focusing on lone-actor terrorists and other kinds of solo violent individuals.

Finally, it is worth considering the nature of *Fixation* behaviours between the age cohorts studied. The older cohort had a slightly higher rate of observed *Fixation* (47.9%) than the younger cohort (43.20%). However, very broadly speaking, the nature of the *Fixation* is often different between the two groups. When observed in the younger cohort, *Fixation* behaviour tends to be all-consuming and appears in all aspects of their social life. This is very much in line with the manual's conceptualisation of the *Fixation* indicator. *Fixation* creeps into their interactions with their friends, with their behaviour in the classroom, in their interactions

with their parents. Some individuals in the older cohort also behave like this. However, many in the older cohort are better able to mask their *Fixation*. This does not mean there is no strong, over-valued interest in their topic of choice and corresponding social interactions, as this would mean the *Fixation* indicator would not be observed. Rather, individuals often present themselves as 'normal' in some aspect of their life, holding down a job, and having some relatively normal relationships. However, those closer to them often see evidence of the *Fixation*, whether this is a sudden change in their behaviour or withdrawal from their previous level of interaction.

***Fixation* can look different in older individuals, who are sometimes able to better mask their intensely held beliefs. However, those close to them often notice something has changed.**

Identification

Identification behaviours were the most common proximal indicator and was observed in 77.1% of cases. There was not a significant difference in the observation rate between the two different age cohorts (14-18 and 19-25). The high observation rate of *Identification* is possibly due to the nature of the associated behaviours, with young people seemingly eager to portray themselves as belonging to a particular group or movement. To this end, they engaged in a variety of highly performative behaviour, such as posing for images with specific symbols or gestures, referring to themselves as members of the group (despite no evidence of formal ties), wearing clothing or symbols associated with a group or movement, or otherwise indicating their allegiance.

One particularly prominent *Identification* behaviour was that of the ‘digital warrior’. This describes young people who both identified with a group online (most often the Islamic State) and adopted *kunyas* (or pseudonyms) when engaging with others online. These individuals would then communicate with other likeminded peers and share extremist material more broadly. For some, this was a relatively easy way to try on the identity of a warrior in a cause, without necessarily engaging in non-digital activities (though many also did go on to engage in physical *Pathway* behaviours). This sub-type is strongly reflective of the performative nature of online identities, where individuals are able to portray and curate their identities more easily than in offline spaces. This also strongly reflects the increasing role of online spaces in the development of identity for young people.

Other young people went further in their *Identification* behaviours and started to more fully adopt warrior or pseudocommando personas in the physical world. However, this behaviour was typically highly performative, often around assembling an outfit that imitated a previous attacker. Brenton Tarrant, the perpetrator of the 2019 Christchurch attacks, was the most commonly emulated figure. Seven young people in the dataset imitated Tarrant in various ways, from recreating aspects of his outfit, to creating similar manifestos, to planning ‘Christchurch 2.0’ attacks. With these behaviours, there was some overlap, being evidence of not only *Identification* behaviour, but also potentially *Pathway* behaviour.

Sometimes behaviours may fit under more than one item. Behaviours associated with *Identification* can appear to be purely performative. However, if the behaviour also includes items that may be useful for an attack, it should also be recorded under the *Pathway* warning behaviour.

Novel Aggression

Novel Aggression was the least observed proximal indicator in the dataset, only observed in 4.6% of cases. This prevalence is similar to prior studies of TRAP-18, such as Vargen and Challacombe's study of violent sovereign citizens, which observed *Novel Aggression* in only 6% of cases.¹⁷

Despite the low prevalence of this indicator, it is highly concerning when it does occur. Examples of the behaviour include young people harming animals or engaging in simulated attacks that test the individual's ability to engage in violence.

Though rare, *Novel Aggression* manifests in highly concerning behaviour when it does occur.

One challenge is observing *Novel Aggression* in young people who have a proclivity towards instrumental or predatory violence. As they have engaged in a history of violence, it is not possible to observe *Novel Aggression*, and thus, this item was coded as absent. In this sense, an absence of *Novel Aggression* does not decrease the level of concern. This is because rather than testing their ability to be violent, an individual has already demonstrated their capacity to

be instrumentally violent. This highlights the importance of notes in forming the overall assessment. It is important to note that *Novel Aggression* is the testing of predatory or instrumental violence and not reactive violence. This is an important distinction, as young people may often be involved in minor violent acts such as reactive aggression or schoolyard fights.

The absence of an item does not necessarily mean a decrease in a level of concern. For example, the absence of *Novel Aggression* because of known history of predatory violence could elevate the level of concern.

Energy Burst

Energy Burst was observed in 20.6% of cases. This is perhaps one of the most difficult indicators to observe from publicly available evidence as there is rarely detailed enough collateral to code it. *Energy Burst* requires a certain level of understanding about an individual's baseline behaviour, and even with relatively detailed court documents, this is not always easy to establish. Because of this, it is expected that this behaviour occurs at a higher rate than the evidence suggests.

However, when it does occur, *Energy Burst* behaviour is typically made evident in a rapid change of an individual's daily activities. *Energy Burst* behaviour was more common in individuals aged 18 and younger compared to the older cohort (29.7% of cases as compared to 17% of cases). This may be due to older individuals being more able to integrate their preparatory activities in their day-to-day life. In contrast, younger individuals, who typically have a more structured and regimented lifestyle, may be less able to hide these activities or otherwise

have to do more in a shorter window of opportunity. Alternatively, it may reflect the intensity of *Fixation* in younger people, where the intense focus on violent extremist topics prompts a burst of activity.

Leakage

A young person communicated their intent to engage in violence in 39.7% of cases in the dataset. There was a noticeable difference in *Leakage* rates between those 18 and younger (51.40%) and those 19 and older (35.1%). This means the two items in TRAP-18 with the most difference between the two age groups are *Leakage* and *Directly Communicated Threat* (which is detailed below), with younger people more likely to engage in both of these items.

There are many potential explanations for this. The simplest is that the younger cohort tend to be 'noisy' in their views. This means they are both strongly invested in their views (whether ideological or some other kind of fixation behaviour) and they want others to know about it. Moreover, there is a sense of identity work in many examples. Put differently, younger people use vague threats of violence to create a certain image of themselves. Engaging in *Leakage* may give them a sense of power and excitement, forcing others to respond to them. Alternatively, they may have a lower level of emotional regulation and feel the overriding need to talk about their interests, despite the negative consequences of doing so.

Another potential explanation is differing social contexts. The social context matters in that while both age cohorts heavily rely on virtual spaces, the younger cohort does so to an even greater extent. As a result, much of their *Leakage* occurs online, often in non-private spaces (like open social media accounts, or more public spaces, such as relatively non-exclusive chat rooms). This means when *Leakage* does occur, more people are likely to notice it.

The broad nature of violence between the two age cohorts is relevant to *Leakage*. Generally speaking, the kind of planned violence in the older cohort is often more complex and more akin to more traditional ideas of group-based terrorist violence. Because of this, there is a stronger emphasis on operational security, which naturally means *not* leaking intent. In contrast, planned violence in the younger cohort tends to be more personal (either in the sense of their specific grievance) or identity driven. Because of this, there is a strong need for the individual to make others recognise their message or identity. Put differently, the violence of young people tends to be more identity-driven, and thus, needs to be communicated. This is when *Leakage* occurs.

Younger people are more likely to engage in *Leakage*. This serves an important role in creating and projecting their identity.

Last Resort

Last Resort behaviour, where an individual indicates they have no option but to act violently, was relatively rare, being observed in 19.1% of cases in the dataset. There was a difference between the two age cohorts, with those 18 and younger engaging in *Last Resort* behaviour in 27% of cases compared to those 19 and older engaging in it in 16% of cases.

The most common trigger for *Last Resort* thinking was the cancellation of an individual's passport. As a result, the individual could no longer fulfil their goal of travelling (most often to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State). In response, they reasoned their only choice was to act locally (and often, as soon as possible). Similarly, some individuals who were under 18 years old were

prevented from travelling because their parents blocked them from getting a passport. One 17-year-old noted that he would have to act locally because ‘my parents wouldn’t approve [of me getting a passport.]’ In either scenario, the cancellation of a passport often also served to reinforce and heighten the young person’s sense of grievance. Because of this, there was a strong overlap between the proximal indicator of *Last Resort* behaviour and the distal characteristic of *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*, with 87.5% of young people who displayed *Last Resort* behaviour also displayed *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*. It should be noted that the relationship between these two items was not linear – grievances tended to exist prior to the *Last Resort* behaviour, which then subsequently served to reinforce the grievance.

Directly Communicated Threat

Directly Communicated Threat behaviour is when an individual communicates a threat to the intended target or law enforcement. In a sense, it is a more directed version of *Leakage*. *Directly Communicated Threat* behaviour was observed in only 12.20% of the dataset. However, there was a significant difference between individuals 18 and younger, who engaged in direct threat behaviour in 27% of cases, and individuals aged 19 and up, who only engaged in it 6.4% of cases. This is one of the single largest differences between a TRAP-18 item between these two age demographics.

There are several potential explanations for this. First, the proportionally smaller number of individuals in the 18 and younger category may potentially skew the results to an extent. Alternatively, younger people may just be ‘noisier’. This again speaks to the tendency for young people to be more performative in their behaviour. Like *Leakage*, *Directly Communicated Threats* are a way for an individual to express themselves and to act out their ideological or personal views. Sometimes there was questionable capacity for violence behind the

threat, such as a teenager sending threats to a religious centre on the opposite side of the country. This again speaks to the performativity of the behaviour.

Younger people tend to be louder in their intentions. This provides an opportunity for detection and response.

However, this does not mean that threats should not be regarded as a highly concerning. Of those 18 and younger who made threats, 25% went on to engage in an attack, while 44% were arrested before they could do so.¹⁸ This contrasts to the 19 to 25 age category, where individuals who made direct threats were immediately arrested.¹⁹ This suggests that threats made by older individuals may be taken more seriously by authorities. However, as suggested by the threat behaviour in the 18 and younger category, younger individuals do have the capacity to go on to conduct an attack.

***Directly Communicated Threats* must be taken seriously and demand a response, regardless of the age of the threat maker.**

■ **Distal Characteristics**

Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage

This item describes an individual experiencing some form of *Personal Grievance* (such as an adverse life experience) or demonstrating *Moral Outrage* about some topic (often in the form of a vicarious identification with a suffering group).²⁰ Across the dataset, this item was observed in 71% of all cases. There

was a noticeable difference in the observation rate between the two age groups. It was observed in 56.8% of young people in the 14-18 category and in 76.6% of those in the 19 to 25 cohort. The results for the 19-25 age group are more in line with earlier studies of violent lone actors, where the item was observed in 80% of cases.²¹

Every individual in the 18 years and younger category that was coded with *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* also displayed *Identification* behaviour (100%). This cohort additionally displayed *Fixation* in 71.4% of cases. Of those that did NOT have a *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*, only 43.8% displayed *Identification* behaviours. This suggests there may be a relationship between developing a *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* and adopting a group identification. It may also contribute to shaping the intense and over-valued beliefs required for *Fixation* behaviour. That this link is particularly strong in the 18 and younger group likely reflects the importance of identity development during this age period. In a sense, the existence of these grievances and moral outrage fuels the adoption of a more extremist and/or violent identity.

The existence of a *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* contributes to the forming of *Identification* and *Fixation* behaviours, particularly in younger people. Thus, identifying these grievances early and helping the young person address them in a pro-social manner is an important threat mitigation strategy.

The sub-group of young people who did not have an observable *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* but did display *Identification* behaviour appear to

be driven more by a pseudocommando identity or aesthetic disconnected from a more explicit connection to their life experiences or the injustice experienced by others. However, this does not mean they had no capacity for violence, as most (71.4%) of these individuals also engaged in *Pathway* behaviour, including one young person who ultimately conducted an attack. This stands in contrast to the equivalent 19 to 25 age category that did not have *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*, but who did display *Identification* behaviour. In this cohort, only 27.3% engaged in *Pathway* behaviours.

Regardless of whether they engaged in violence or not, why do individuals identify with specific causes without having *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*? The TRAP-18 manual notes that this item is typically the first step on the path to violence, even if most individuals with a grievance or moral outrage do not go on to do violence. An explanation of this may be found in the importance of *Framed by an Ideology*, which, as will be discussed shortly, was nearly universal across individuals in the dataset.

Alternatively, another possible interpretation of the data here is that younger people are more attracted to extremist identities for non-ideological reasons. This may be due to the aesthetic of the ideology, which allows for a young person to adopt an appealing identity, despite the lack of any particular specific grievances. It may be that the *Pathway* behaviours allow a young person to act out on their *Identification*, or they otherwise believe that if their identity is that of IS warrior or far-right soldier, then they must also act on these identities.

***Identity* can fulfil the role of ideology and beliefs in triggering action, particularly for younger people engaging in identity formation.**

Negative emotions resulting from grievance or moral outrage may serve as a primary catalyst for the development of *Fixation* behaviour. Data indicates that young people harbouring a *Personal Grievance* or *Moral Outrage* were four times more likely to become *Fixated*. In this context, *Personal Grievance* or *Moral Outrage* may act as the emotional fuel for an over-valued belief, driving a preoccupation that ultimately exerts a significant negative impact on a young person's life.

***Personal Grievances* can be an important factor in helping *Fixations* to form. Understanding the role a personal grievance plays in an individual's life is a crucial consideration when writing up the threat assessment and formulation.**

For young people with idiosyncratic or non-traditional beliefs, a *Personal Grievance* may provide a concrete target to focus their *Fixation*. This is particularly evident when an individual's worldview falls outside the standard ideologies typically tracked in this dataset. In many cases, these grievances are filtered through conspiracy theories, which allow the individual to frame their past negative experiences within an esoteric or outsider logic. The small subset of young people displaying incel ideologies serves as a primary example of this dynamic, a process explored further in the section on *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding*.

Framed by an Ideology

Framed by an Ideology is defined as the presence of beliefs that justify an individual's choice to act violently. Because of this broad definition, it was the

most common item in the dataset, being observed in 87% of cases. This reflects the nature of the dataset drawn from young people charged or involved in some kind of violent extremist offence. Because of the relatively high threshold for prosecuting this kind of crime (which includes the presence of some ideological views), it is not surprising that it was so common.

The TRAP-18 manual notes that ideologies tend to justify *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*. This was true of the young people in the dataset, with 97.8% of individuals with a *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* also framing their views through ideological lenses (95% for the 18 and under cohort, 98.3% for the 19 and above cohort). Ideologies provide a form of answers as to why the world is as it is, and what needs to be done to make it better. Alternatively, an individual can adopt an ideological framing, and the moral outrage or personal grievances can follow from that.

Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage strongly correspond with the presence of an ideology.

What is notable, however, is the difference between the two age cohorts. The 14 to 18 group displayed *Framed by an Ideology* in 73% of cases, whereas the 19 and over group displayed *Framed by an Ideology* in 92.60% of cases. Clearly, ideology is important for the majority of both groups.

The Absence of Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage or Framed by Ideology

However, the sizable proportion (24.32%) of the 18 and younger group who do not display either *Framed by an Ideology* or *Personal Grievance or Moral*

Outrage poses the question – why are they in the dataset?

These individuals fall into two broad categories. The first category is those fixated on nihilistic mass violence. These individuals tended to be highly fixated on violent extremist figures, often explicitly identifying with Brenton Tarrant, the perpetrator of the 2019 Christchurch shootings. These individuals wished to conduct an act of mass violence essentially as a homage to the terrorist, disconnected from any particular ideology, including of Tarrant's own. Curiously, while some of these individuals did have *Personal Grievances*, there were some who did not. These individuals are thus not interested in violent extremism; rather, they are interested in extreme violence. This is a good example of how the absence of an item does not necessarily entail a reduction in threat.

The absence of *Framed by an Ideology* is not necessarily an indication of less threat. It may mean, given the presence of other behaviours, the individual is fascinated by violence itself, divorced from any particular ideology. This can even occur absent any specific observed *Personal Grievances* or *Moral Outrage*.

The second group of younger people without observed *Framed by an Ideology* or *Personal Grievance* or *Moral Outrage* are those involved in or charged with violent extremist crimes but not for violent extremist purposes. This is a relatively rare group, with only two individuals (young girls). One girl was diagnosed with ASD, and one of her strong interests was in the nasheeds often found in IS propaganda and instructional material. However, she had no interest in the ideology. The other girl collected funds for IS without understanding what

the group was.

It is possible to engage in violent extremist activity without either a grievance or an ideology. This may reflect an interest in extreme violence, rather than violent extremism. Despite this, the majority of younger people tend to frame their violence in terms of ideology.

Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group

Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group was the least observed item in this study (3.8%). Conversely, it was the item with the highest rate of absent outcomes (65.60%). The reason for this is that the dataset contained a large number of young people involved in group plots or who were otherwise engaging in violent extremist activities which necessitated contact with other radicalised individuals, such as travelling to a conflict zone. As such, the prevalence rate of this item for group actors was only 3.2%. These individuals were able to join a group (such as IS), but subsequently left after they became disillusioned, but continued to engage in violent extremism with other individuals. The *Failure to Affiliate* prevalence rate was similar for lone actors, with only 4.2% failing to affiliate. This contrasts with previous studies of lone-actor terrorists which found the characteristic in 29% of cases, or another study of North American lone-actor terrorists that found it in 12% of the sample.²²

When it does occur, *Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group* can suggest a shift towards a more violent or confrontational plan of action, as evidenced by two individuals in the dataset. One experienced rejection by other IS supporters for his grandiose claims and fanciful plans for guerilla warfare in Australia. Another rejected The Base (a violent extremist white supremacy group)

as a ‘honeypot’ and not dedicated to real action. Alternatively, *Failure to Affiliate* can result in a stepping down of action, such as experienced by one man who travelled to Syria and was disillusioned by his time with IS.

As previously mentioned, this item had the highest rate of absent coding of all the TRAP-18 items. However, ‘absent’ here is not the same as ‘less threatening.’ Conversely, an absent for *Failure to Affiliate* can suggest that an individual has effectively maintained contacts with other extremists. This contact may be deep or shallow, but regardless, they were able to maintain a relationship with other extremists, and this is concerning in and of itself. The meaning and significance of group affiliation, or the inability to affiliate must be considered in the overall threat assessment and formulation.

Finding *Failure to Affiliate* to be present does not necessarily result in an increased level of concern for an individual. Conversely, finding *Failure to Affiliate* to be absent does not necessarily result in a decreased level of concern for an individual. Like most items, this must be contextualised with the individual’s behaviour.

The reasons for the low rate of observation and the high rate of absence may also suggest a shift in how radicalised individuals form relationships. Specifically, the importance of online relationships. As the TRAP-18 manual notes, ‘[Failure to affiliate with an extremist or other group] is likely lessening in frequency as the need for actual affiliation has decreased with the advent of social media.’²³ The data supports this assertion, with the *Dependence on the Virtual Community* effectively substituting for the need for affiliation with a physical group for many young people. Indeed, the few examples of *Failure*

to *Affiliate* observed related to physical groups, not virtual ones. This suggests that making the transition from virtual spaces to physical groups can be difficult for some. However, this is caveated by the fact only a very small number of examples from the dataset inform the analysis.

Online spaces have effectively replaced the need to affiliate physically for many individuals, and in particular for young people, reducing the chance they will experience *Failure to Affiliate*.

The low observation rate of this item may also reflect the original intent of TRAP-18 to assess lone-actor terrorists and other solo violent actors. This does raise the question of how to use TRAP-18 with individuals who may be more linked to a group, and whether items like this are superfluous. One important consideration here is that when doing an initial threat assessment, an individual's level of connectedness is not necessarily known. They may be a lone actor, or they may be a group actor, with this information possibly not known until after an event or arrest. In this sense, having *Failure to Affiliate* as an item is helpful as it prompts the assessor to consider the individual's social context and how embedded (or not) they may be.

Dependence on the Virtual Community

As noted above, *Dependence on the Virtual Community* was a common item, observed in 73.3% of cases in the dataset. It was only absent in 3.8% of cases (all of which occurred in the 2000s) and unknown in the remainder. It is probable that the actual presence rate is higher, but there was not enough data to positively code it. The TRAP-18 manual encourages coders to define

Dependence on the Virtual Community ‘quite broadly’ and states that ‘use of any cyberspace’ for virtual interaction or virtual learning is sufficient to fit the characteristic.²⁴

There was a difference between the 18 and younger cohort, who had a *Dependence on the Virtual Community* in 81.1% of cases, whereas it was observed in the 19 to 25 cohort in 70.2% of cases. This possibly reflects the cohort having largely been born in the post-2008 period, which saw the widespread adoption of online spaces in all aspects of day-to-day life.

The high rate of observation speaks to the ubiquity of virtual spaces in all aspects of involvement in violent extremism, from accessing violent extremist material, to shopping for useful equipment and weapons online, to conducting research for the specifics of an attack. Given the widespread presence of the internet and virtual spaces, it would be highly unusual if any young person did *not* use online spaces.

Dependence on the *Virtual Community* is ubiquitous. It is unusual if individuals do not show evidence of being engaged online.

This raises the question around the utility of this item. Rather than being particularly meaningful in and of itself, this item potentially gives coders a space to reflect on why an individual engages in these virtual communities, and what they get out of their involvement. Does this engagement fulfil a social need, or does it offer a space to perform attack preparation? These are important considerations when it comes to the overall case formulation.

The reasons why someone is dependent on an online community are perhaps more important than simply whether they are or not.

Thwarting of Occupational Goals

Thwarting of Occupational Goals refers to serious setbacks in terms of education or employment goals experienced by an individual. This item was observed in 30.5% of cases in this study. There was a very minor difference in the rate between the 14 to 18 cohort (29.7%) compared to the 19 to 25 cohort (30.9%).

There was a noticeable overlap between the *Thwarting of Occupational Goals* and the presence of *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*, with 92.1% of individuals experiencing educational or occupational setbacks also displaying *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*. It should be noted that these grievances were not necessarily tied to the thwarting. Indeed, this actually appears to be the exception, with a direct link only observable in a few cases. For example, one young person noted that ‘It disgusts me when I see the lower mindsets climb the ladder with laughable ease, while I cannot even step foot upon [it].’

For the 18 and younger cohort, thwarting occurred as a significant failure or setback in the educational setting. This often means being expelled or excluded from school due to behavioural issues. For these young people, this typically resulted in a collapse of structure in their lives. The result was more time to become fixated and focused on their potential act of violence, as was seen in 72.7% of these young people. Moreover, these young people tended to be lone actors without significant real-world ties to other extremist individuals (but typically dependent on online relationships). *Fixation* was observed in 30.8% of individuals who did not experience the *Thwarting* of their goals.

Exclusion from school can be a highly significant factor in developing or reinforcing a *Fixation*.

The 19 to 25 age cohort experienced a similar dynamic, with those failing at their education or employment goals becoming fixated in 62.1% of cases, compared to 41.5% becoming fixated without being thwarted. This suggests that the failure to achieve their goals remains a significant influence in *Fixation*, though to a lesser extent than in the younger cohort. One broad observation is that in the older cohort, *Fixation* often *followed* their educational or occupational failures. However, in the younger cohort, *Fixation* often occurred *alongside* their *Thwarting* (and was sometimes the cause of their exclusion).

One of the challenges with this item is determining how relevant it is to an individual's potential for engaging in violence. That is, it is very normal for teenagers and young adults to struggle to find their way in life. Doing well at school, deciding upon a career, and finding stable and satisfactory employment are a challenge for the general population, let alone the specific population in the dataset. It is perhaps unsurprising that this item has strong links to *Mental Disorder*, with individuals with a *Mental Disorder* being almost three times as likely to experience the *Thwarting of Occupational Goals* than those without a *Mental Disorder* (52.2% as compared to 18.8%). For these individuals, the pathway to violence began with the perception that they have failed in life.

Adverse educational and occupational outcomes exacerbate, or are exacerbated by, the presence of mental disorders.

These mutually reinforcing items may reflect a distinct lack of structure in an individual's life. Assisting young people who are struggling at school can help to prevent the development of unhealthy personal grievances.

Changes in Thinking and Emotion

Changes in Thinking and Emotion refers to a cognitive shift towards a binary and black-and-white worldview, where complex social or political issues are reduced to rigid, polarised extremes. It also captures the intensification of emotion in general. This item was observed in 67.2% of cases. It was noticeably more common in the 19 to 25 age group (observed in 73.4% of cases) than in the 14 to 18 age group (observed in 51.4% of cases).

Of all items in TRAP-18, *Changes in Thinking and Emotion* is likely to be the indicator that is potentially common but rarely observed in the dataset. Despite *Framed by an Ideology* and *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* being so commonly observed across the population, the evidence available was often limited to the period in time in which the individual was displaying these views. As such, it was often difficult to get a sense of the individual's baseline and demonstrated change. The vast majority of individuals in the dataset displayed binary thinking around ideologies, or intense emotion around their grievances. What was not visible was the individual's state before the adoption of these views. As such, it was difficult to code this item.

That said, when evidence was sufficient to establish that the young person had indeed changed in how they view and feel about the world, it is often

quite apparent. The sudden adoption of highly charged language, arguments and disagreements with others over different topics, and the presentation of withdrawn, angry dispositions are evident across the dataset. Most often, reflective of the life stages they find themselves at, it was typically evidence from the families of the young people that established this shift.

Collateral obtained from those around the individual being assessed is crucial in the accurate observation of whether their thinking and emotion is changing.

Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding

The TRAP-18 manual defines *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding* as the lack of evidence of an adult (18+ years old) forming a sexually intimate relationship with someone for whom there is also a positive attachment or bond that has endured for a period of time. According to this definition, 21.4% of individuals in the dataset cannot be coded due to their age. In the interest of exploring the utility of this item outside this specific definition, it was decided to code this item without the specification that the individual is an adult. Despite this, it was not possible to observe any instances of this characteristic occurring in those younger than 18 years old, largely due to data availability.

As described in the quantitative results, this item was one of the least observed, present in 16.2% of cases. Observing this characteristic is highly dependent on quality data. As noted in the definition above, the crux of this item is that an individual has or has not engaged in sexual relations with a desired partner they have a positive attachment to. This is perhaps one of the most narrow and specific definitions in TRAP-18, and as a result, finding data, particularly in

publicly available open-source data, is a significant challenge. Additionally, the characteristic raises questions around what ‘failure’ means in the context of young people who, at least within Western societal contexts, are not necessarily expected to have formed such relationships at this point in their lives.

For absent instances of this item, it was inferred by the presence of a long-term relationship and the existence of children. Strictly speaking, this remains only an inference. Similarly, the few observed instances of a failure to sexually pair bond remain inferences, typically based on serious relationship breakdowns resulting in obvious emotional or social difficulty for the individual. Several such individuals in the dataset had very short-term marriages in their early 20s. These marriages may reflect the cultural pressure experienced by young people from some cultural backgrounds to marry young without necessarily having the emotional or mental maturity for such a commitment. As a result, they experience a failure in romantically pair bonding, the negative consequences of which are compounded by the social ramifications of divorce.

Several individuals demonstrated their inability to pair bond through the expression of incel ideas. One individual stated that his ‘urge to kill’ was because he was a virgin. Another individual was recorded as possessing this characteristic due to his intense sexualisation of his intended violence, where he described his desire to obtain ‘sex slaves’ and to rape women of a specific religion.

Ultimately, without overt statements around an individual engaging in sex (or not), this is a difficult item to code. If the item was instead called ‘thwarting of romantic relationship goals’, it would be significantly easier to code, while still capturing the importance of the core concern – the ability of an individual to form healthy relationship goals.

'Failure' to sexually pair bond is difficult to assess in young people, including those in their early 20s, where the baseline norm is not necessarily to achieve this.

Mental Disorder

Mental Disorder is defined as a mental disorder (including personality disorders) being present in an individual's history. This item was coded in 35.1% of young people in the dataset. The specific disorders are detailed in the quantitative findings section, but it is worth examining the two most common observations: depression and anxiety (both at a rate of 30.4% of the total population with a mental disorder). That these two disorders are the most reported is not surprising, as depression and anxiety are the two most commonly reported mental disorders in young people in the wider population. What is notable, however, is that when expressed as a percentage of the total dataset population (including those not recorded as having a *Mental Disorder*), depression and anxiety are only observed at half the rate (10.7%) of a study of the general population of Australians aged 10 to 24, which found the prevalence rate of depression was 21.3% and anxiety 29.9%.²⁵

One potential explanation for this is that involvement in violent extremism fulfils needs, albeit in an unhealthy way. Engaging in proximal behaviours like *Pathway*, *Identification*, *Fixation*, and connecting with other extremist individuals are all activities which may give a young person a sense of purpose and direction. It may also contribute to a sense of 'clandestine excitement', or the positive emotions experienced by engaging a secret world, hidden from everyday life.²⁶ This in turn may help these young people manage their anxiety and depression, albeit in a maladaptive way.

Violent extremism can fulfil human needs, reducing the visibility of *Mental Disorders*. This does not mean that individuals do not have mental health needs, and this is something that should be considered in case formulation.

There was a difference in the rates of *Mental Disorder* between those 18 and younger (45.9%) and those between 19 and 25 (30.9%). The higher observation rate of mental health conditions in the younger cohort may potentially be explained by the use of mental health services between the two groups. The 18 and younger group are typically present in an education environment, often with a family structure remaining in place around them. Because of this, there are potentially more opportunities for a younger person to be referred to a mental health service.

Neurodiversity has been included in the *Mental Disorder* item in the updated version of the TRAP-18 manual. As noted in the quantitative analysis, ASD was observed in 14 individuals, split evenly between the two age cohorts. This perhaps reflects a delay in what information is available publicly, given the rising number of cases of individuals with ASD being referred to countering violent extremism programs and counter-terrorism police. The relationship between the presence of ASD and other behaviour varied from individual to individual. Some engaged in sophisticated *Pathway* behaviours, testing and developing complex weapons. Young people with ASD were well represented in the *Creativity and Innovation* item due to these behaviours. Other young people with ASD acted more as collectors, building large libraries of violent extremist material. The reasons for this behaviour varied, with some holding beliefs in line with the material they possessed, whereas others seemed to find the material soothing in some way. A final group of individuals with ASD engaged in vivid fantasy

worlds that revolved around the minutia and details of a prospective act of mass violence, writing extensive notes around the paraphernalia and equipment that would be used in an attack.

Previous research into the interaction between ASD and violent extremism has highlighted the connection between potential restricted interests possessed by an individual and violent extremist material. Individuals with ASD often have strong visual and rote memory and may incorporate violent extremist material into their internal fantasies, particularly if they find the material to be aesthetically satisfying.²⁷ As Al-Attar further notes, because these individuals will often have impaired social imagination, they may be unable to make the content relevant and appropriate to their life, social, or political contexts.²⁸ Additionally, they may tend to focus on the details of the fantasy rather than the broader social meaning of the fantasy. This is evident in the creation of documents like equipment lists that would be used in an attack. However, it is possible that some of the attack planning observed in the dataset represents a kind of fantasy work. Again, as Al-Attar notes, acting out one's fantasy may 'enhance the fantasy beyond internal mental imagery in order to obtain the desired reward intensity', which is particularly compelling when the individual is stressed, angry, or depressed.²⁹

The relative ease that young people are exposed to violent extremist material, particularly in online spaces, means that a higher proportion of young people with ASD are being exposed to material that has potential interactions with their restricted interests.

This potentially raises the question of whether individuals engaging in fantasy enactment are necessarily on a *Pathway* to violence – when is attack planning an actual attempt to prepare for a coming attack, and when is it a soothing and compensatory behaviour for a troubled individual with little actual capacity for violence? From the perspective of an initial threat assessment, the fact that this behaviour is occurring (and appearing under the *Pathway* proximal indicator) is concerning, regardless of what drives the behaviour. However, when it comes to the case formulation, understanding the role of the individual’s interests and thinking style is a crucial consideration in their management going forward.

How neurodiversity impacts on behaviour varies from individual to individual. This highlights the importance of case formulation that reflects the individual and the relevance of neurodiversity to the young person’s offending trajectory.

Creativity and Innovation

The *Creativity and Innovation* item represents an individual’s ability to demonstrate tactical or strategic thinking that is novel, ‘outside the box’ or otherwise innovative. Across the dataset, *Creativity and Innovation* was one of the least observed items at a rate of 10.8%. This contrasts to previous studies which have found an incidence rate of 29% of global lone-actor terrorists and 53% of North American lone-actor terrorists.³⁰

There are several potential reasons for the low observation rate in the current sample. First, there is a proportion of the cohort that are not focused on a

specific act of violence, instead being involved in violent extremism in other ways. The *Creativity and Innovation* distal characteristic, as per the TRAP-18 manual, is focused on a *planned terrorist or targeted act of violence*. As a result, any young person that is otherwise supportive of violent extremism or violence but not planning an attack would not be captured by this indicator, even if they were broadly creative and innovative.

However, a significant proportion of the young people in the dataset did plan an act of violence. Another more straightforward explanation for the low observation rate of this item is that the young people in the dataset are simply not particularly creative or innovative in their attack planning. This is not surprising, as previous research has found that younger violent offenders are significantly more likely to engage in copycat or imitative behaviour.³¹ This is true in the sense of social and societal exposure to violence (i.e. media, their social peers), but also in the tendency for young people to attach themselves to particular figures (in a form of celebrity worship). This tendency is also visible in the dataset with the most common item being *Identification*. For many young people, this meant identifying with a previous terrorist offender, with their planned violence being an imitation of the original. For some, the similarities were intentional, with their attack intended to be a homage to the original. For others, it seems the original event instead serves as an example to imitate but mediated through their own particular grievances. Because of this copycat behaviour, there is relatively little desire for tactical or strategic innovation.

A small number of young people did show creativity, however. Often, this combined with their pre-existing interests and skills, particularly those relating to technical interests. An example of this is a young boy who planned to conduct an attack and to do so, used a 3D printer to assemble a firearm. While this in

and of itself is not particularly innovative, the young boy engaged in extensive online research and conducted relatively sophisticated manufacturing to develop the firearm. The fact he was able to do this suggests that he had a degree of creative and innovative thinking that is important to consider in the context of a threat assessment.

Criminal Violence

Criminal Violence refers to an individual's history of using instrumental and predatory violence (rather than reactive violence or aggression).³² This was present in 20.6% of the dataset. Conversely, a confirmed absence of a *History of Criminal Violence* was relatively high at 44.3%. Those in the 19 and over cohort were slightly more likely to have a *History of Criminal Violence* (22.3%) than those 18 and younger (16.2%). These findings contrast with other studies of TRAP-18 which have found *Criminal Violence* rates as anything between 100% to 43% in varying samples.³³ One explanation here is that because of their age, the young people in the study had simply had less chance in life to violently offend. There is also the possibility that some of the young people in the cohort were violent, but the violence was dealt with through diversionary measures, rather than the violence being prosecuted as a crime. This may possibly influence the relatively low rate of *History of Criminal Violence*. With that said, prior diversionary measures would typically be noted in a court setting, meaning this possibility mainly applies to young people that do not have publicly available court records.

The vast majority of the young people in the dataset did not engage in *Criminal Violence* before their involvement in VE.

Where *Criminal Violence* was observed, as per the item's description, the violence was relatively serious, including assaults, armed robbery, or general affray. This violence was mostly in the context of young gang violence, though there were several instances of an individual engaging in violence against specific groups (targeting LGBTIQ+ people, or police officers). Because of their demonstrated ability to be violent, these individuals received an absent coding for *Novel Aggression*, as their capacity for violence was already established.

For this reason, when it is observed, and even though it is a distal characteristic, *Criminal Violence* is in some ways more akin to a proximal characteristic, in that an assessor's level of concern may be significantly raised.

***A History of Criminal Violence* can serve the same psychological function as *Novel Aggression* – a demonstrated capacity to engage in interpersonal violence for material or other gain.**

5

Illustrative case studies



Illustrative Case Study 1

This case study considers a teenager whose involvement with violent extremism is heavily influenced by the online environment.

The POI is a 17-year-old male living at home with his parents and two siblings (one brother, one sister).

He was born five years after his parents emigrated from Syria to Melbourne. His parents are Sunni Muslims but are not strict adherents to their faith. He has had a good upbringing in a supportive and non-radical family. The POI has no prior criminal convictions and does not have a current passport. The POI has recently ceased attending school during Year 12.

The POI has had unsupervised access to his own computer and the internet since he was 6 years old. From Grade 2 until the end of Year 9, he attended a local private college before transferring to a different campus in Melbourne's north for the commencement of Year 10.

In February 2014, the POI became increasingly isolated, shifting his social interactions almost entirely into digital spaces. By June 2014, he began to show symptoms of an anxiety disorder and had distanced himself from his peers at school. He spent his evenings logged into various messaging platforms, often staying awake until the early hours of the morning engaging on social media. During this period of near-total digital socialisation, he also began consuming cannabis, eventually reaching a daily intake of approximately half a gram. He started eating erratically and visibly began to lose weight.

During the July 2014 school holidays, the POI was searching for the recorded lectures of various international Islamic scholars. By August 2014, his search history and social media feeds were dominated by news reports regarding the conflict in Syria, specifically focusing on reports of Sunni Muslims being targeted by Shiite militias and Western forces.

In December 2014, the POI commenced an intensive, self-directed course in Arabic. He stayed awake until 4:00 am most mornings, toggling between language tutorials and propaganda videos produced by the Islamic State. Over the 2014-2015 summer break, the POI grew a thick beard. When he returned to school for the start of Year 12 in February 2015, the administration instructed him to shave. He refused to comply and stopped attending classes entirely. He spent his days and nights immersed in online communities, speaking almost exclusively to people he met through extremist forums.

At home, the POI isolated himself in his room, rarely speaking to his parents or siblings. He began criticising his sister's choice of clothing and stopped making eye contact with her during the rare instances they were in the same room. He also asked his parents to renew his passport as it had lapsed. His mother responded that he didn't need one and to not worry about it.

In February 2015, the POI used Facebook to initiate contact with a British jihadist based in Raqqa. After several days of messaging, the POI told this contact he intended to travel to Syria to join the conflict. The contact asked if he had a passport, to which the POI replied that he was still a minor and his parents would not grant the necessary permission for him to apply. The contact responded by telling the POI to stay in Melbourne and perform an act of service there. In early March 2015, at the contact's instruction, the POI downloaded a secure, encrypted messaging application called Session to continue their communications in a more covert way.

Throughout March and April 2015, the POI began discussing technical requirements for operational security with his contact. He installed an encryption application on his computer and moved all his downloaded files into hidden, password-protected folders. **In mid-April**, the contact sent the POI a series of links to digital manuals. One was titled ‘Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom’ and focused on the construction of an ‘iron pipe’ device. A second document, ‘Pressure Cooker Backpack Bomb with Switch Detonator,’ detailed how to produce an explosive device using common household items and advocated for placing such devices in crowded areas to maximise casualties. The manuals specifically recommended using large amounts of shrapnel and camouflaging the devices with cardboard.

On 14 April 2015, the POI walked into a kitchenware store in a nearby shopping centre. He selected a six-litre capacity pressure cooker. When a staff member assisted him, the POI stated he was purchasing the item as a gift for his mother. He paid for the item using cash his parents had given him for school supplies, having told them he needed a new set of textbooks. Upon returning home, he took a photograph of the pressure cooker on his bedroom floor and sent it to his contact via Session. He then hid the box in the back of his wardrobe.

On 25 April 2015, the POI began a systematic shopping trip across various hardware stores in Melbourne’s western suburbs. He purchased four elbow-shaped lengths of steel pipe, eight matching end caps, and three additional lengths of steel with end caps already fitted. He also bought five boxes of 50mm galvanised screws. He stored these items in a plastic tub under his bed. Over the next several days, the POI sat at his desk with 26 boxes of matches. Using a small craft knife, he methodically scratched the strike-sensitive heads off several hundred matches, collecting the loose powder into a small plastic bag which he kept in a desk drawer.

On 1 May 2015, the POI logged into Facebook and sent a private message to a former school acquaintance. He wrote, 'Watch what is going to happen in a few weeks. I'm very busy, might never see you again'. Later that evening, he sat in his room with a notebook and wrote several pages in Arabic, describing his disdain for those he termed 'disbelievers' and 'apostates'. He wrote that he was worried that his passport would not be renewed. He also wrote out a list of potential locations in the Melbourne Central Business District, including Flinders Street Station and several busy tram stops.

On 3 May 2015, the POI began searching for information on electrical switches and battery-operated detonators. Following the instructions in the 'iron pipe' manual, he began assembling the steel pipes he had purchased. He fitted end caps to two of the pipes and began filling the voids with the match-head powder he had previously collected. The POI also posted an inflammatory message on Facebook that said, 'Shias might look like humans but don't be fooled. They are animals who know how to talk.'

On 6 May 2015, the POI visited a discount variety store and purchased a packet of 'hundred lights'. He told the cashier the multi-coloured string of lights was for his sister to decorate her room. When he returned home, he sat at his desk and began stripping the plastic coating off the wires, preparing to use the internal filaments as an ignition source for the pipe bombs.

On 7 May 2015, the POI exchanged messages with a different Facebook user. He told the person he would miss them, but that they would soon 'meet in paradise and you would be green birds'. That afternoon, the POI returned to his computer and performed several Google searches for train timetables during the morning peak hour and the locations of police stations within the city. He also accessed a web forum to troubleshoot the wiring of a remote-control

switch. That evening, he placed the five boxes of screws he had bought earlier alongside the partially constructed pipe bombs in the tub under his bed. He sat at his desk and continued to monitor Session for a final confirmation from his contact.

The POI was arrested on 8 May 2015 for doing acts in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act.

Proximal Indicators

Code	Notes
PI1: Pathway	
Present	The POI received bomb making manuals from his IS contact. The first was an article called ‘make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom’. That article included instructions for the preparation of an IED called ‘iron pipe’. The second manual was headed ‘pressure cooker backpack bomb with switch detonator’. The POI also did further research on his own. The POI had purchased a pressure cooker, several pipe joints, many screws, and a significant number of matches. These materials were to be used in either the creation of a pressure cooker bomb or in a series of pipe bombs (three of which may have been completed). These devices were to be detonated in the Melbourne CBD.
PI2: Fixation	
Present	Over the end of 2014 and the 2014/2015 summer holidays, he became intensely interested in the conflict and in particular, IS. He began to learn Arabic. He stayed awake until the early hours of the morning communicating with individuals online while watching IS produced videos. His family noticed how withdrawn he had become during this time. His focus on events in Syria and IS led to both social and occupational decline.

PI3: Identification	
Present	The POI viewed IS as the ‘saviours’ of Sunni Muslims. Additionally, he spoke of meeting in heaven as a green bird, linking himself with the idea of being a martyr.
PI4: Novel Aggression	
Absent	There is no evidence of the POI engaging in any aggressive behaviour.
PI5: Energy Burst	
Present	The POI’s <i>Pathway</i> behaviours occurred during a short period (April 25 to May 8). This included the research of assembling an IED, purchasing the components for it, as well as the communication he was engaging in. April 25 in particular is notable because it was a significant departure from the POI’s usual routine.
PI6: Leakage	
Present	On 1 May 2015, in a private communication he told one correspondent to ‘watch what is going to happen in a few weeks’ and said, ‘I’m very busy might never see you again ...’. On 7 May 2015, during another exchange, with a different user, he said to that person that he would miss him, but that they would ‘meet in paradise and you would be birds’.
PI7: Last Resort	
Present	It is possible to see the POI’s actions as being Last Resort behaviour in the context of his belief that he would be unable to get a passport to travel to Syria. In the context of his narrowing worldview that demanded action, this meant that the POI would have no other choice but to act locally and act now.
PI8: Directly Communicated Threat	
Absent	There is no evidence of a Directly Communicated Threat.

■ Discussion

The POI has six (out of eight) proximal indicators present. When a single proximal warning behaviour is present, it requires active threat management regardless of the individual's age. It is essential that practitioners do not use a POI's youth to exclude or negate the potential threat to public safety.

Adolescence is often a turbulent developmental stage focused on attempts to form a stable self-identity (who I am) while navigating social roles, values, and goals. In this context, the POI's *Identification* warning behaviour and *Fixation* behaviour seems to reflect an attempt to make sense of himself as a young Muslim man, living safely in Australia, while the country of his family is enduring a period of violence and instability.

His increasing interest in the Syrian conflict, his glorification of Islamic State as 'saviours' and his changes in appearance to appear more visibly Muslim, sit uncomfortably beside his 'impious' behaviour such as marijuana use, as well as his anxiety, potentially invoking feelings of shame and a desire for redemption or escape through martyrdom.

In the case of this young POI, his youth meant he did not have the agency to organise a passport so he could undertake travel to the conflict zone in Syria. However, his imperative to act was not negated, and this potentially contributed to his *Last Resort* behaviour, with the POI turning his attention to committing a violent act locally.

The *Pathway* indicators in younger people can be influenced by the logistical constraints of being a minor. However, the case study of this POI demonstrates how these logistical constraints can be overcome in an environment that enables online access to both technical manuals and people that can influence and encourage the young person to act.

The POI's *Energy Burst* behaviour likely reflected an increased sense of agency that had been thwarted through his parents' refusal to organise a passport. Here, by manipulating his parents into giving him money for school supplies, the POI was able to orchestrate an opportunity to procure the components of an IED. The *Leakage* behaviour suggests a degree of pride (potentially mitigating his earlier shame) at his new identity as a warrior for IS.

Distal Characteristics

Code	Notes
DC1: Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage	
Present	The POI experienced moral outrage about the events then occurring in Syria and the suffering being inflicted on Sunni Muslims including his own family in Syria. He developed a personal grievance when the school directed him to remove his beard, and he chose to stop attending school instead.
DC2: Framed by an Ideology	
Present	The POI's social media posts indicated that he clearly saw the world through a radical Islamist lens. He posted material that was supportive of IS.
DC3: Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group	
Absent	This is absent. The POI was in contact with several individuals online who shared his ideological views.
DC4: Dependence on the Virtual Community	
Present	The POI utilised social media to make posts expressing his radical views. He also accessed IS material online.
DC5: Thwarting of Occupational Goals	
Present	This is marked as observed due to a combination of the POI's withdrawal from school as a part of a disagreement over shaving his beard, as well as his voluntary termination of the TAFE course he subsequently enrolled in.

DC6: Changes in Thinking and Emotion	
Present	As the POI became more interested in radical Islam and IS, he started posting messages which expressed his hatred for kuffar, non-Muslims, and for those Muslims who were regarded as apostates. He expressed disgust for Shia Muslims calling them 'animals' and 'cockroaches'.
DC7: Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding	
Unknown	There is no evidence available as to whether the POI had ever been in a relationship (romantic or sexual).
DC8: Mental Disorder	
Absent	There is no known formal diagnosis for the POI. Despite this, in the year leading up to his arrest the POI was suffering from some degree of depression and social anxiety, and these states contributed to his withdrawal and subsequent radicalisation. Although this would not be marked as present due to the lack of evidence, the presence of anxiety should be noted in the formulation and consideration of the trajectory into radicalisation.
DC9: Creativity and Innovation	
Absent	There is no specific evidence of this. The POI's plan involved the detonation of an IED (which followed the design from IS material) in a public place.
DC10: History of Criminal Violence	
Absent	The POI has no criminal record and there is no evidence he has actually been violent.

■ Discussion

Distal characteristics provide the basis for developing a case formulation for the POI's trajectory into the behaviours that have brought him to attention. The POI has five (out of ten) distal characteristics marked present and paints a picture of a young person who is struggling to have his identity and belonging needs met in pro-social ways.

To become independent, young people need to go through a process of questioning society and finding their role within it. It is a period of life when there may be an increased awareness of systemic unfairness, combined with biological changes that mean young people strongly feel the emotional impact of perceived injustices but may not yet have the cognitive development to make sense of them in a complex way. This may make them more vulnerable to influence, either positively or negatively, as they seek ways to make change in the world.

In this sense, the POI's present distal factors intersect with aspects of his adolescent development that provide context for his increasing risk profile. While the POI had agency in seeking out and engaging in extremist forums, his need for social belonging and independence almost entirely replaced any meaningful engagement with his family, contributing to *Dependence on the Virtual Community*.

Within this virtual community, he appears to increasingly identify with a group that he perceives to be suffering (Sunni Muslims) at the hands of an oppressor (Western governments). When the school directed him to shave his beard (a symbol of his personal identity as a Muslim), it likely connected his *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* at this perceived oppression in a way that increased his identification with who he perceives as victims, and that later transforms into identification with IS aggressors.

Furthermore, the POI's sensitivity to injustice was likely reinforced and heightened in a way that was *Framed by an Ideology* within the virtual community. The ideology may have acted as a framework to support the difficult transition to adulthood, albeit in a destructive way.

While the *Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group* is marked absent, this absence is clearly not a positive factor in the POI's life. Within TRAP-18, this Distal factor seeks to identify those POIs who may undermine or circumnavigate a group or cell's strategic plans by attacking independently. However, in the case of this POI, his *success* in affiliating with an IS operative has facilitated his *Pathway* behaviour and likely contributed to his *Identification* behaviour.

Similarly, the absence of *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding* does not suggest that the POI *has* successfully established a protective intimate relationship. Rather, the Distal characteristic (as noted in the TRAP-18 manual) is less relevant for young people, who are unlikely to have stability in this aspect of their lives. It is possible (but unknown) if the POI had sexual fantasies that he felt unable to achieve. However, it is common for teenagers to become more curious about sex and the availability of virginal young women in the afterlife is a consistent part of IS messaging.

Although the distal characteristic of *Mental Disorder* is marked absent as there was no formal diagnosis, and it is not clear whether he exhibited symptoms which would have led to a diagnosis by a mental health clinician, it is important to consider the role of his anxiety in his social isolation and radicalisation *Pathway*.

The *Creativity and Innovation* characteristic encourages the assessor to consider if a POI tends to think 'outside the box', potentially demonstrating a capacity to apply this to the perpetration of violence. The absence of this Distal

characteristic, similar to those mentioned above, is not a positive. Rather, this POI is engaging in imitative behaviour, following instructions and procedures introduced to him by someone who has become influential in his life. The absence of this characteristic may suggest the POI is easily influenced by others, lacking a strong sense of self as he develops his identity.



Illustrative Case Study 2

This case study focuses on a 19-year-old male who is fixated on the idea of committing a mass casualty attack and who demonstrates some ambiguous interest in the extreme right.

The POI is a 19-year-old male who was born and raised in Australia.

The POI was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as a teenager and has received National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) support. The POI attended a local public high school, where he completed his Year 12. He lived in the family home with his two parents.

From at least February 2024 (during his last year of school), the POI wrote a series of notes in a diary that detailed plans to commit mass casualty attacks, including a shooting at his former high school, planting bombs at a university, derailing a train using chemicals, shooting at police officers, and poisoning the city's water supply. The POI wrote that his weapons research was 'infallible'. In one note, he wrote:

It disgusts me when I see the lower mindsets climb the ladder with laughable ease, while I cannot even step foot upon it. Sickening sight when mixed with growing thoughts of future vengeance. May be too much to bear. Achievement unlocked plagueeth be unto thee.

He also wrote that:

By the time police arrive, I can imagine them breaking down the door, coming into the house and seeing the gory mess. I hope that it is one or two cops' first day of work, and when they see the bodies, it haunts them for life...

You could be a principal reading this and realising there could be a possible killer in the school, but I don't care... Just a word of advice if you're a principal reading this: if you expel me and put a restraining order on me, I'll show up anyway and kill a random student before I kill myself.

Other notes included commentary on the accuracy of the Year 12 textbooks used in his history class, and suicidal/homicidal ideation. Large sections of the diary included writings on the *Minecraft* video game, which the POI was strongly interested in, and the POI had begun writing in code.

The POI's school had reported to police some concerning comments made by the POI in the classroom. As a result, the POI's bedroom was the subject of a search warrant by police in July 2024. During the search, the POI's diary and the above comments were found. Some other unusual items included a fake mobile phone and women's clothing. No charges were laid at this time.

Despite this police intervention, the POI continued in his research. He began to research gun manufacturing. He also made enquiries online, asking for instructions on how to build a gun. He soon began researching 3D printed firearms, including where he could obtain them. The POI also purchased 250 grams of a chemical used to manufacture explosives online, which was posted to a PO box away from his home. The POI was also noted to conduct 'science

experiments' in his room, fermenting jars of fruit and other materials in his bedroom. At one point, the POI's father found his 'science experiments' in the POI's cupboard and attempted to remove them. The POI started to yell at his father, saying that he was not allowed to touch his stuff and to get 'the hell out of my room.' This occurred several times before the POI's father gave up attempting to remove the materials.

During this time, the POI also searched for videos of the Christchurch massacre multiple times between July and September 2024.

Alerted by a number of concerning purchases, police conducted a search of the POI's room in September. They found that the POI had collected 500 rounds of ammunition, gun parts, tactical gear, a ballistic vest and helmet, and metal parts they believed to be components for a homemade gun. Some materials were hidden in the garage, air vents, and a fence. At least 250 grams of the explosive precursor chemicals remained unaccounted for following these raids, with police theorising they may be hidden at a secret off-site location. They also uncovered additional notes which continued in a similar vein to the ones discovered in July. There was also additional indication that the POI was targeting a university in the area for a potential bombing attack.

At this point, the POI was charged with planning a school shooting and the planned bombing of the university. He was denied bail and held on remand.

In December 2024, police raided the POI's cell following a tip-off from Corrections about a number of concerning items found inside. New notes were discovered, including etchings on his cell wall, describing plans for attacks against police and transgender people, along with antisemitic and Nazi-type content.

Proximal Indicators

Code	Notes
PI1: Pathway	
Present	The POI engaged in extensive planning and preparation. He researched weapons, gun manufacturing, and the Christchurch massacre. He also acquired precursor explosive material, gun parts, ammunition and tactical clothing.
PI2: Fixation	
Present	The POI had a strong fixation on mass murder and committing a violent attack. His notes contain a detailed fantasy around committing violence and relishing the impact of the 'gory mess' he would inflict on the arriving police. Additionally, the POI's interest in conducting an attack led to conflicts with his father to the extent his father simply ceased attempting to deal with his son's concerning behaviour.
PI3: Identification	
Present	The POI has an interest in the Christchurch attack and purchased clothing items reflecting a similar aesthetic as to what was worn by the Christchurch attacker.
PI4: Novel Aggression	
Absent	No evidence of this occurring.
PI5: Energy Burst	
Unknown	It is hard to determine whether any energy burst is visible. Instead, the POI seems to have been consistently engaging in concerning behaviour from Feb 2024, resulting in multiple police raids, time in remand, and continued activity while on bail, and continued activity in prison.
PI6: Leakage	
Present	The POI was in contact with unknown individuals online, where he enquired about instructions on how to build a gun, saying he wanted to 'take revenge' on his high school class.

PI7: Last Resort	
Present	The POI, in his notes, wrote that his distress at seeing others succeed instead of him was ‘too much to bear’ and that he would take revenge. He also explicitly states that he ‘made a vow to myself. Before I commit suicide, I will take someone else’s life, and that person will die horrifically...’ This captures an emotional hopelessness linked to homicidal actions for the POI.
PI8: Directly Communicated Threat	
Unknown	This is coded as unknown based off the comments made by the POI at his school – they may have been DCTs, but there is no specific evidence of the POI making such direct threats otherwise.

■ Discussion

The POI exhibits five of the eight proximal warning behaviours, a profile that requires active threat management. The POI’s *Pathway* and *Fixation* behaviours appear deeply intertwined with his ASD, including circumscribed interests and rich fantasies related to violence. However, this does not mitigate or reduce the possible threat the POI may pose. While evidence does not support a causal link between autism and committing violence, neither does it support a conclusion that violence cannot be an outcome. For this POI, the planning and acquirement of weapons represents a potential transition from abstract fantasy to concrete tactical preparation. The POI also engages in active operational security behaviour, demonstrating a capacity to circumvent parental and school-based supervision.

The POI’s *Identification* with the Christchurch perpetrator appears to be more reflective of this perpetrator’s high-profile act of violence and subsequent notoriety rather than a meaningful ideological alignment. The POI is adopting a pseudocommando identity, potentially as a maladaptive defence mechanism

to compensate for underlying feelings of powerlessness, vulnerability and frustration. This violent persona may be serving as a compensatory facade to ward off perceived threats and gain a sense of control or social status within his environment. However, such a maladaptive process can have dangerous behavioural outcomes. This is discernible in the POI's *Leakage* in online forums and diary entries, which collectively reflect a *Last Resort* mindset, where his sense of emotional hopelessness can (in his mind) only be resolved through a final, gory act of vengeance. While suicide ideation is statistically common in young men, it is also a period of heightened risk. The active planning of suicide through homicide cannot be dismissed as benign.

Distal Characteristics

Code	Notes
DC1: Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage	
Present	In his notes, the POI wrote that he was 'sickened' by the success of others while he could not 'even step foot' on the ladder of success, resulting in thoughts that were 'too much to bear.'
DC2: Framed by an Ideology	
Unknown	While in Corrections, the POI wrote notes that 'surround attacks against police and transgender people, along with antisemitic Nazi-type documentation.' Whether this indicates an ideological framing is difficult to determine, particularly when the POI's personal grievances seem so prominent.
DC3: Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group	
Absent	No evidence of this.
DC4: Dependence on the Virtual Community	
Present	The POI relied on the internet for instruction, validation, and logistical purposes of enabling his potential attacks.

DC5: Thwarting of Occupational Goals	
Present	The POI noted that he was unable to succeed in life. Additionally, his NDIS package specifically included provisions for 'future career planning,' suggesting it was a significant concern.
DC6: Changes in Thinking and Emotion	
Present	The POI noted that he had 'growing thoughts of future vengeance.' This suggests that he recognises that he increasingly focuses on his fantasies of death and vengeance against a society he feels has wronged him.
DC7: Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding	
Absent	No evidence.
DC8: Mental Disorder	
Present	The POI was diagnosed with ASD and had received a NDIS support package.
DC9: Creativity and Innovation	
Present	The POI showed a degree of creative thinking in his ability to create explosives, both in sourcing the materials, but also in creating the explosives himself. He was also willing to use a relatively high level of operational security, including the use of remote PO boxes.
DC10: History of Criminal Violence	
Absent	No history of actual violence against individuals.

■ Discussion

The six present distal characteristics of the POI provide a foundation for understanding how his developmental setbacks may be fuelling a transition to active threat behaviours. As a young person transitioning out of high school, the POI is at a developmental crossroads where pressures to transition to a meaningful adulthood collide with his own perceived failures to achieve this

in a meaningful way, suggesting a *Thwarting of Occupational Goals*. His NDIS package, which specifically includes ‘future career planning,’ underscores that his inability to achieve independence may be a significant source of distress. His comparison of himself with others (who he perceives as ‘lesser’) to make these transitions suggest that his distress is manifesting in significant *Personal Grievance*, potentially at the school for failing to ensure he reaches these adult markers. Potentially, the POI’s autism is contributing to a black-and-white moral framework where those who represent or symbolise the system that he perceives as failing him (the school and the police) and those he sees as benefiting unfairly from that system (lesser peers) are fuelling a sense of *Moral Outrage* that casts them as legitimate targets for violence.

The POI’s *Dependence on the Virtual Community* provided the technical manuals and validation helps to bridge the gap between his grievances and his plans. While his *Ideological Framing* remains somewhat incoherent, incorporating Nazi-type content, antisemitism, and transphobia, this more likely reflects both the accessibility and exposure to these materials in the context of his violent ideation rather than a deeply held, stable belief system. The lack of a coherent ideology does not necessarily diminish his capacity for violence. Instead, it may suggest a young person who used extremist aesthetics to decorate a pre-existing fantasy of mass murder, utilising his technical aptitude to give form to his internal state of *Changes in Thinking and Emotion*. Ultimately, his profile depicts an adolescent whose search for agency is increasingly consumed with violence as a method of achieving it, necessitating interventions that address both his capacity for harm and his underlying developmental despair.



Illustrative Case Study 3

This case study features a young girl whose neurodivergence is a significant factor in her attraction to violent extremist material.

The POI is a 14-year-old girl. Her parents emigrated from Syria before she was born and settled in Australia.

The POI has an older brother who was also born in Australia. The family are all practicing Muslims, and the family attends their local mosque weekly. The POI's parents are very traditional, with music being banned at home as it was considered to be haram. The POI did not take issue with this and followed her parents' rules.

After experiencing some learning difficulties at primary school, the POI was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. She continued with mainstream schooling and was soon attending the local public high school. In Year 8, she received a school laptop which she used in the classroom and to do homework. She also accessed social media and browsed the internet on the laptop. The POI's parents also gave her a mobile phone so she could stay in contact with them.

Around the start of the Year 8 school year, the POI became aware that certain kinds of religious music were in fact allowed by her parents. She found out that this music was called a 'nasheed'. She looked up nasheeds on the internet and started to download and listen to them whenever she was in her room.

The POI found the music to be soothing, and she could concentrate on her schoolwork if the nasheeds were playing. She appreciated how some had

repetitious chanting, whereas others had harmonious choral segments. The POI didn't tell her parents about the nasheeds – not because she was worried about what she was listening to, but because she knew her father listened to nasheeds too. Rather, she liked that she had her own 'thing'. She would speak to others that she had met on social media about the nasheeds and by February, she was asking others where she could get more Islamic music and nasheeds. She was given a link to a Discord group that she could join.

After joining the Discord group, she found that there were many different channels with lots of different videos. Most had men dressed up in army outfits with guns. However, some of these videos also contained nasheeds. She was excited that she had found more music to listen to. There were so many different videos and audio files to download on the Discord.

The POI noticed that some of the nasheeds she had downloaded were from the Islamic State and some were from Hamas. Some weren't just music files but were videos. Some of the videos contained images of warlike scenes, and sometimes they were gory, including beheading videos. One of the videos was a man in a military-style outfit and camouflage explaining how to make a bomb with English subtitles. However, they all had nasheeds as the background music, and so she continued to collect them. The POI preferred some of the nasheeds in the more violent videos because the music was synchronised to what was happening on the screen – the music and motions fit together in a way the POI found satisfying. She collected 35 different videos all containing nasheeds. She renamed the videos (they often came with filenames that were long and meaningless) and categorised them according to length.

The POI made sure to download these videos from Discord and to save them on her computer and phone. This meant she could listen to them whenever she

wanted. Over the next couple of months, she constantly watched and listened to these videos, even doing so at school.

By June, the POI's mood and mental state were declining. Her brother noticed this and asked her what was wrong. She told her brother that she was thinking of hurting herself. Worried about what he would later call her 'really concerning thoughts', the POI's brother thought to look at her phone, which she was on all the time. There, he found some videos. He immediately recognised the videos as Islamic State propaganda and was repulsed by the scenes of graphic executions and torture. Concerned for his little sister, the POI's brother contacted police.

■ Proximal Indicators

Code	Notes
PI1: Pathway	
Absent	The POI was charged with a number of offences which she ultimately pleaded guilty to, including the possession of explosive instructions (in the form of a video of how to make a bomb). Typically, possessing instructional materials like this would constitute mobilisation behaviour under the manual's definition of <i>Pathway</i> . However, in this specific case, it seems that the POI's possession of the explosive making material was more linked to her desire to collect IS/extremist nasheeds (of which some contained explosive instructions). There is no suggestion of violent intent in any of the collateral. In this instance, <i>Pathway</i> is regarded as absent, despite some features (material useful for conducting an attack) that would otherwise suggest it is present.

PI2: Fixation	
Unknown	While the POI collected violent religious extremist material and downloaded six videos to her phone and 16 to her school laptop, it is not clear whether this resulted in social decline. As such, her activity is not regarded as being a Fixation. The only exception to this is around the thoughts she expressed to her brother. Potentially, if these were related to violent extremism or the material she had collected, this could be regarded as an example of a social relationship being impacted by her interest in the material. However, without further evidence, it is not possible to determine this.
PI3: Identification	
Absent	There is no evidence of Identification behaviour. It is known that the POI was in contact with individuals spreading extremist material to some degree, but there is little evidence beyond that to suggest how the POI saw herself and her role (and whether she even particularly had an ideology). Because of this, this is absent.
PI4: Novel Aggression	
Absent	There is no evidence of Novel Aggression.
PI5: Energy Burst	
Absent	There is no evidence of Energy Burst Behaviour.
PI6: Leakage	
Unknown	The POI came to attention of police after the POI's brother took her to hospital after she 'expressed some really concerning thoughts' and looking through her phone and finding 'videos of concern.' What exactly these thoughts were is unknown - they may have been self-harm related, though the fact the brother thought to look through her phone to find concerning videos suggest that there may have been some link between the two. However, to consider this to be Leakage in the sense of a potential attack is perhaps too far to go. Recorded as unknown.

PI7: Last Resort	
Absent	No evidence of Last Resort Behaviour.
PI8: Directly Communicated Threat	
Absent	No evidence of any Directly Communicated Threat.

Discussion

The POI does not clearly present any proximal indicators of violence. This does not mean that the POI is not engaging in concerning behaviours. Rather, there is little indication that she is mobilising to violence.

The POI has come to the attention of authorities for two reasons. The first is that she seems to be undergoing some kind of crisis where her own safety is threatened. This is considered further in *Mental Disorder*. However, it is worth noting that the nature of her comments to her brother (described as ‘really concerning thoughts’) could potentially, depending on the exact comments, fit under the proximal indicator of *Leakage*. This would only be true if the comments related to some intended violence against others. Given this possibility, *Leakage* was coded as being unknown, requiring some follow-up. Similarly, if the POI’s comments reflected her strong interest in extreme religious material or views in some way, they could potentially fall under *Fixation*. Regardless, there is something of concern here, whether that is intentional *Leakage* or whether there are some serious concerns for the POI’s own safety and wellbeing.

The second reason she has come to attention of the authorities is the downloading of violent extremist material. Most of this material are propaganda videos, though there is at least one instructional material that details, in English, how to create an explosive device. This would potentially be captured under

Pathway if there was evidence to suggest that it was collected to conduct a potential attack. However, there is no evidence that the POI has any intent to conduct violence. Indeed, instead there are other reasonable explanations for why the POI collected this material, as further explored in the distal characteristics.

Distal Characteristics

Code	Notes
DC1: Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage	
Absent	Without knowing what the ‘thoughts of concern’ were, it is not possible to observe the POI expressing any Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage.
DC2: Framed by an Ideology	
Absent	It is difficult to determine whether the POI explicitly collected the material for ideological purposes. Given the lack of any other indications of an ideological framing (or indeed any political views at all), this item is regarded as absent.
DC3: Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group	
Absent	This is absent as the POI was in contact with individuals online who provided her with the extremist material over Discord.
DC4: Dependence on the Virtual Community	
Present	The POI obtained the extremist material from contacts on Discord, who ‘identified her as someone they can distribute [extremist material] to.’
DC5: Thwarting of Occupational Goals	
Absent	No evidence of this, POI was in school.
DC6: Changes in Thinking and Emotion	
Unknown	Without knowing what the ‘concerning thoughts’ were, this is not observed.
DC7: Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding	
Absent	No evidence of this.

DC8: Mental Disorder	
Present	The POI was diagnosed with autism from a young age. She has also expressed ‘concerning thoughts’ recently which could potentially relate to self-harm or potential suicidality to the extent she was hospitalised.
DC9: Creativity and Innovation	
Absent	There is no evidence of Creativity and Innovation.
DC10: History of Criminal Violence	
Absent	The POI has no criminal history of violence.

■ Discussion

Two distal characteristics are found to be present: *Dependence on the Virtual Community* and *Mental Disorder*. These two characteristics provide a strong sense of what drives the POI’s behaviour when contextualised with her home life.

The POI’s downloading of VE material suggests that there may be some level of being *Framed by an Ideology*. However, while the material itself was of an ideological nature (religious extremist Islamic State material in most cases), and there is the suggestion that she was ‘not distressed by the content of the videos’, this does not necessarily mean that the POI was attracted to the material for the ideological content of the videos.

Rather, it seems likely that the behaviour was at least partially driven by the POI’s Autism and how she copes with day-to-day life. It was noted that the POI’s parents had banned music in the house, but at the same time, the POI found music to be an effective way to self-soothe and to help her focus. It is not surprising then that she gravitated towards music that was religiously acceptable, like nasheeds. Autistic people often have a deep need for rules and

following them, so the POI in this case has managed to find a helpful way to cope that is within the rules set down by her traditional and strictly religious parents.

However, it is how she accessed this material that is of most concern. As noted above, *Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group* is found to be absent and *Dependence on the Virtual Community* is found to be present. This reflects the POI meeting extremist individuals online, most notably through the Discord group. It is important to note here that the impetus to join the Discord group was *not* seeking out extremist contacts. Rather, it was the POI attempting to learn and obtain more nasheeds – their specific content was not the focus. Unfortunately, the POI ended up in a space that did contain highly concerning and illegal material. Her susceptibility to being influenced in online spaces suggests that she would benefit from support in relation to online safety and identifying material that is acceptable or not.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of the POI's case are her 'really concerning thoughts', as her brother describes them. While there is no further detail around what exactly these thoughts are, it is likely, given the POI's subsequent hospitalisation, that there was some expression of suicidality or willingness to self-harm. Whether this is at all related to the material she had accessed is unknown. However, even if the POI is not accessing the violent extremist videos for their ideological content and only for their musical appeal, watching them repeatedly would be harmful. These videos contained scenes of graphic and brutal violence. For young people, and particularly Autistic young people, distressing and graphic imagery can imprint in one's visual memory and result in repeating intrusive thoughts.³⁴ Whether this is occurring with the POI will be important to find out, but if true, it points to the importance of working with the POI to help her to develop healthier coping mechanisms (such as finding more

mainstream, non-jihadist nasheeds), upskilling her around online spaces, and helping her family to work with her to foster more open communication.



Illustrative Case Study 4

This case study features a young man who becomes involved in violent extremism primarily through his social relations.

The POI is a 21-year-old male of Lebanese descent with no criminal history.

He has a brother who is one year older, who is also a POI, and a half-sister who is six years younger. The POI's parents are observant but not ardent Muslims and have not sought to provide much religious guidance or instruction to their children. The parents separated when the POI was 10 and he had witnessed family violence by his father against his mother and sister in the lead up to the separation. The POI's father is a strict disciplinarian, but the POI has not experienced direct physical harm. Both English and Arabic are spoken in the family.

The POI attended both primary and secondary school at a private Islamic college and was initially described as a quiet and withdrawn child who struggled with literacy and was slower to reach academic milestones than his classmates. By secondary school, the POI was reportedly more confident and outgoing, making friends and taking up boxing. The POI successfully completed year 12 in 2012, however, he did not get the marks required to pursue his preferred career in engineering, and so instead began to study financial planning at university, dropping out after his first year. The POI reportedly described himself as a 'fish brain'. The POI subsequently completed vocational certificates in warehousing and electrical work, eventually finding employment as a painter in 2014.

By 2014, the POI's brother had moved out of the family home, and the two saw each other less frequently. In 2015, the POI married a young woman according to Muslim custom. The couple initially lived together but the marriage ended in late 2015 after only six months. The POI was reportedly very upset by the separation and returned to live with his mother. During this period, when not working part-time as a painter, he isolated himself in his room, spending between eight and ten hours a day playing computer games.

Throughout 2016, the POI worked sporadically as a painter. By May 2016 the POI searched and downloaded online lectures by the extremist cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki. He also downloaded multiple 'Jihad nasheeds'. The POI began to attend the Hume Islamic Youth Centre several times a week with his brother, his 27-year-old cousin (also a POI) and another 24-year-old associate (also a POI).

On 2 December 2016, the four POIs drove to a rural location 55 kilometres north of Melbourne. The associate reportedly expressed misgivings about including the POI, however his brother vouched for him, stating the POI had wanted to come with them for 'the lesson'. During this trip, the group tested an improvised explosive device (IED).

Later that same afternoon, the POI, his brother and their associate drove to Chemist Warehouse. While the POI's brother remained in the car, the POI and his associate entered the store and purchased a bottle of hydrogen peroxide, a precursor chemical for the explosive TATP.

On 14 December, the POI conducted Google searches for 'Victorian firearms licence requirements' and 'how to obtain a firearms licence' and downloaded the application form for Category A and B firearms. On 17 December, the POI accessed the site and re-downloaded the same application forms.

On 20 December 2016, the POI met his brother, cousin, and their associate at the Hume Islamic Youth Centre. From there, the group travelled in the cousin's car to the Melbourne Central Business District. They walked through Federation Square toward Flinders Street Station and St Paul's Cathedral undertaking reconnaissance. As they moved through the crowd, the POI's brother was captured on CCTV making a chopping motion to the neck of one in the group, which he described as a demonstration on how easy it is to kill someone with a blade.

All four conspirators were arrested on **22 December 2016** and charged with planning and preparing a terrorist attack and conspiring to plan or prepare an attack.

Proximal Indicators

Code	Notes
PI1: Pathway	
Present	The POI travelled with his brother, cousin and associate to an area to test an IED. He was also involved in purchasing a bottle of hydrogen peroxide used as an ingredient for the explosive TATP. He also engaged in a reconnaissance trip to Melbourne CBD.
PI2: Fixation	
Unknown	There is no particular sense that the POI is fixated on Islamist ideology. The POI was recruited into the plot by his brother in the final three weeks.
PI3: Identification	
Unknown	There is no specific evidence that the POI saw himself in terms of a pseudocommando. While he had some minimal engagement with jihadist propaganda, there are no expressions that suggest he himself saw himself as a possible martyr or similar. It appears that it was his brother's plan to use the POI in this way.
PI4: Novel Aggression	
Absent	No evidence of Novel Aggression or any criminal history or activity.
PI5: Energy Burst	
Absent	The POI's involvement in the plot was limited to a few days over a three-week period. This is not particularly indicative of an energy burst, rather, his limited involvement due to being included in the plot at a late date.
PI6: Leakage	
Absent	The POI did not engage in Leakage behaviours.
PI7: Last Resort	
Unknown	There was no evidence that the POI thought that he was in a Last Resort state.

PI8: Directly Communicated Threat	
Absent	There was no DCT.

Discussion

The POI has only one proximal indicator present. It is essential that practitioners do not associate the number of indicators with greater or lesser levels of threat. When a single proximal warning behaviour is present, it requires active threat management.

While the POI is 21 years of age and therefore an adult under the law, at age 21 males remain in a transitional developmental stage, typically classified as late adolescence (18-21) or emerging adulthood (18-25/29). This phase is marked by the completion of physical maturation; however, it is also a period of continuing brain development and the pursuit of independence, identity formation, and intimacy. The TRAP-18 refers to this stage as ‘in-betweeners’, described as ‘those caught between the identity confusion of adolescence and the identity integration of adulthood.’³⁵

The POI has made attempts to achieve some of the markers of adulthood but has experienced failures. He returned to the family home following the breakdown of his short marriage and has insecure work and therefore limited financial independence. His markedly long hours each day spent gaming in his bedroom suggests a failure to transition successfully to more adult behaviour and responsibilities.

In this context, the lack of proximal warning behaviours reflects how the POI is largely a follower, particularly influenced by his brother and the social relationships in his orbit. His *Pathway* behaviour consists of him participating in activities conceived and organised by others, which he was subsequently

included in. Overall, it appears he would not have engaged in this behaviour without the influence of the close familial relationship to others in the conspiracy. The lack of positive role modelling by the POI's father may also have left the POI in search of the acceptance and approval of other older men. In this context, the POI did not demonstrate agency by rejecting the actions of others in the conspiracy, rather he appears to have drifted along and been content to be included. This suggests the POI is largely socially driven, rather than ideologically.

Distal Characteristics

Code	Notes
DC1: Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage	
Unknown	There is no particularly strong sense of the POI experiencing personal grievance or moral outrage. This could arguably be inherent in his attachment to the ideology, but it could also be argued that this attachment was driven by the POI's relationship with his brother.
DC2: Framed by an Ideology	
Present	The POI made a number of searches online for Anwar al-Awlaki. Additionally, he downloaded 'Jihad nasheeds'. Whether this indicates a particularly strong sense of the ideology is perhaps debatable. However, these factors, along with his participation in some of the weapon testing, suggests that the purpose of the group and plot had some resonance.
DC3: Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group	
Absent	The POI was in a group with his older brother, cousin and another associate. While the POI would have presumably known his co-conspirators for a significant portion of his life, he was deemed to have been 'recruited' by his brother in early December 2016.

DC4: Dependence on the Virtual Community	
Present	The POI had downloaded lectures by al-Qaeda ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki and listened to jihadi nasheeds.
DC5: Thwarting of Occupational Goals	
Present	The POI aspired to study engineering but failed to achieve the necessary grades. He instead studied financial planning but failed to complete the degree. His subsequent work history is patchy. In 2014, he began working for the first time, as a painter. This continued on a part-time basis and then a full-time basis for six months in 2015.
DC6: Changes in Thinking and Emotion	
Absent	The POI was already hanging out with his brother and friends at the Hume Islamic Youth Centre and was excluded from much of the planning. According to his brother he was hesitant to be a part of the group.
DC7: Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding	
Unknown	The POI was married for six months in 2015, before separating, which he was reportedly very upset about at this time. However, this may not rise to the level of this indicator because little is known about the context of the relationship failure.
DC8: Mental Disorder	
Absent	No evidence of a MD. Given the detail revealed in the sentencing, this is absent.
DC9: Creativity and Innovation	
Absent	No evidence of creativity. Indeed, the POI described himself as a 'fish brain' and the planning for the attack was driven by his brother and the other plotters.
DC10: History of Criminal Violence	
Absent	No criminal history.

■ Discussion

The POI has three distal characteristics marked present. The assessment seems to indicate a period of aimlessness or instability regarding the POI's circumstances leading up to his involvement in the plot. It also suggests a degree of ambivalence to the ideological aspects of his offending.

While the POI is experiencing some personal setbacks and gives the impression of being unfulfilled, there is no sense that this has become the basis for *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*. The POI was described as 'upset' rather than angry by his marriage breakdown, followed by isolating himself to play video games. This may suggest the POI tends to internalise his negative experiences, rather than look outwards to externalise blame.

There is no evidence that he interprets these personal setbacks as the result of broader religious or political factors. However, being *Framed by an Ideology* can precede a personal grievance, with engagement or immersion in the ideology serving to reinterpret previous setbacks in a way that assigns blame to others. In this way, the internalised negative emotions that arise from personal setbacks can be transformed to something more mobilising to the cause. Possibly due to his limited time within the conspiracy (only three weeks), the POI does not exhibit *Changes in Thinking and Emotion* that may have emerged with more time.

The POI has demonstrated a limited engagement with the ideology, downloading and viewing lectures by known extremist preacher and IS supporter, Anwar al-Awlaki. Similarly, while most nasheeds are melodic expressions of spirituality, jihadi nasheeds are a militant subgenre that incorporate romanticised themes of battle, violence, killing, martyrdom, and the restoration of a caliphate. They are designed to appeal to the emotions. The

presence of any online activity related to ideological beliefs leads to a present coding for *Dependence on the Virtual Community*. It is possible that more intense immersion in the ideology over time may have led to a higher level of intellectual and emotional commitment to the cause of IS. However, it appears that the POI engages more with the ideology in order to be culturally competent with his brother and the broader conspiracy group, rather than because of an intellectual interest or commitment to any doctrinal arguments.

As in case study one, the absence of the *Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group* is not a positive factor for the POI. The radicalisation within his familial circles, along with the POI's vulnerability to influence by his older brother, cousin and associate, has lessened the likelihood of the POI asserting his agency to resist involvement or to actively disrupt the plot by going to authorities. He likely felt that to do so would result in further loss of significant relationships for him.

Both the presence of *Thwarting of Occupational Goals*, and potentially the POI's *Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding*, intersect with aspects of the POI's developmental stage. It is not unusual for young people to refine their identities and test career paths before settling into more stable adult roles. However, the POI's thwarted desire to study engineering has been followed by years of instability, so it is possible that the POI experiences this as a failure. Similarly, while little is known about the quality of the relationship with the woman the POI married, including whether it could be viewed as a positive bond, the quick failure of the marriage and the POI's distress at it ending suggest at least that there was an expectation of this being a positive part of the POI's life that then failed to manifest. This may have further compounded a sense of failure and loss of hope in his capacity to achieve an independent adult life, including adult intimacy.

While the absence of *Creativity and Innovation* suggests that the POI's threat is likely connected to his influence by others, it may also provide insight into a lack of capacity or confidence to navigate the difficulties of transitioning from adolescence to adult life. Although the distal characteristic of *Mental Disorder* is marked absent as there was no formal diagnosis, it is important to consider the impact of family violence in the POI's childhood, and the potential for trauma and depression. Likely, the POI has not been in the environment where diagnosis was considered.



Illustrative Case Study 5

This case study features a teenage male who becomes fixated on the idea of committing a violent attack.

The POI is an 18-year-old male who has been known to police since he was 13 years old.

He came to police attention in December 2020 following a report from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). DHHS reported that the POI was fixated on IS and terrorism and had viewed material on the school computers. They also reported that the POI had made threats to hurt a female student, had sent a photo of a decapitated body to another student, had posted a TikTok video of pictures of IS and shared it with another student with the message 'if you tell the teacher about this I will rip your organs out'. There was no protection application as the Department was satisfied the parents acted protectively.

The POI resided with his parents of Pakistani descent and three younger siblings, one of whom was described as 'non-verbal autistic'. The POI has also been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and had initially been assessed as having an IQ of 56, making him eligible for a one-on-one teacher's aide. A later IQ assessment of 71 subsequently made him ineligible for a teacher's aide. The POI was reportedly bullied at school with some children saying things like, 'You can be a good terrorist one day' and 'You can be Osama bin Laden'. The POI started searching what that meant and has used the idea of being a terrorist to push the bullies away.

The POI was a client of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). He has been suspended from school six times, two of those due to physical or threatening behaviour and four for being disruptive. He reportedly has few friends and appears isolated, with school leadership noting that the POI's behaviour reflects awkward and clumsy attempts to gain approval and friendship. The POI's psychologist noted a relationship between his social isolation and violent ideation and fantasies. The POI's behaviour appeared to escalate following suspension or disciplinary action by the school.

On 17 April 2021 the parents of the POI asked for help from police because their son (then 13 years old) was looking at ISIS related videos on his computer and had asked his mother to purchase bomb making ingredients such as sulphur and acetone. **In May 2021**, the POI was engaged in a CVE program and wrap-around services were implemented. The POI was assessed as having little knowledge about Islam and as not having an ideology. Rather, the POI's interest in IS was described as representing a 'circumscribed interest' characterised as a narrow preoccupying interest that provides intense focus, social identity, a topic to be researched and for conversation that brings him attention.

Beginning July 2021, whilst engaging in a CVE program, the POI was the subject of a separate undercover police operation during which he pledged allegiance to Islamic State and was provided positive social feedback in relation to expressing fantasies that depicted himself as an IS operative. In August the POI posted a photo of himself wearing his school uniform, a hoodie and a face mask and holding a knife with the word ISIS written in Texta. He had also engaged online with someone who appeared to be located in Syria as a 'mujahid'. **In September 2021**, at age 14, the POI was charged with being a member of a terrorist organisation and advocating terrorism. He was subsequently granted bail.

During 2023, while on bail, the POI acquired a Stanley knife during a visit to Bunnings. His accompanying Youth Justice case worker asked him to put it back and the POI complied. **In October 2023**, a permanent stay of the charges was granted, with the judge ruling the POI had been ‘groomed’ by the undercover officer.

Later, the POI was refused entry to Singapore (due to a flag on his passport) while accompanying his parents on a family holiday. They were deported back to Australia, with the applicant distressed that his dream to travel seemed ruined and also impacted negatively on his parents. The POI no longer attended school and was enrolled in TAFE (Technical and Further Education).

Between January and April 2025, the POI posted multiple images and a video of himself with knives and machetes. The video depicted the POI drawing a machete from his pants and images included the POI with a hand gesture associated with IS support.

In April 2025, the POI posted a graphic IS video of captives being executed at close range, along with the English subtitle, ‘And the time has come for revenge’. He also included comments of support of IS. Additional IS videos depicting combat footage, attacks and airstrikes on civilian populations, attacks on Western militaries, and dead bodies were found on a mobile phone hidden in a wall in the POI’s bedroom.

In May 2025, the POI, using the display name of ‘Adolf Hitler’, sent an email to a synagogue. The email content was:

I must say you may be the oldest synagogue but let it b[e] known it will not stop us from killing you poison Jews fuck you all. From Friday Shabbat time there will be a shooter coming in at night and shooting everyone of you fucking venom dead. You people are asbad as shias. Know that the Islamic state has not and will never end. We on behalf of the Khilafah will burn and slaughter all your people in one go for the sole purpose to exterminate the Jewish disease and to create a new solution to the Jewish question And let it be known that the school called [redacted] secondary college has explosives all around the school (in all middle and senior school classroom and bathroom) and is ready to explode soon. Just wait and see the black flag of Islam on top of your burned out synagogue and the flag of Hitler (a very great man) on your synagogue and that school [redacted] secondary college. Be prepared and if I were I would leave the country know all you Jews are not welcome here I hope to see your burnt corpse on television.

The POI was also found to have drawings and handwritten notes depicting the targeting of Australians for killing. In another video on the phone, the POI was depicted swearing the ‘Bay’ah’ to IS in English. His phone also included Telegram conversations with someone he referred to as a ‘sheikh’, along with statements suggesting he wanted to stab or threaten ‘kufir’ and the outline of a plan to stab a specific 16-year-old at his school that the POI was ‘preparing for’. There was also an agreement to start trying to recruit others for IS.

Staff at the POI’s TAFE reported the POI had attended in early May 2025 with what they believed to be a knife. Because of this incident, he was excluded from classes and asked to complete the course online. At various points the POI claimed to be a bkie, that he has killed someone, that he has had sex with

many people, and that he was involved in espionage, and had spoken about arrangements to join the French Foreign Legion, but none of these things are true.

Additional to the POI's ASD diagnosis, he has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). A psychologist suggested that the POI's behaviour stems from the POI's difficulties in communication, emotional regulation and social integration, and from seeking connection rather than from harmful intentions or ideation.

The POI was arrested and remanded in custody in **May 2025** following multiple charges including the use of a carriage service to publish violent extremist material, possessing and controlling violent extremist material, threatening to use force and violence against a group distinguished by (Jewish) religion and using a carriage service to make a threat to kill.

While on remand, the POI has displayed verbal aggression, made sexualised and violent comments towards both staff and peers, and engaged in physical disruptions, including dragging a female staff member by her belt in an attempt to remove her keys. **In July 2025** the POI was refused bail, with the judge ruling that despite the POI's exceptional circumstances, they considered him an unacceptable risk to public safety.

In September 2025, the POI stated he intended to hurt his previous case manager and had felt that way for the past two to three years. He said he had felt fixated on her, and that the only way in which he might be able to end this fixation was to kill her. His bedroom in Youth Justice also included written fantasies about engaging in espionage and shooting up Youth Justice. One of the notes included a verse from the Quran which read, 'Kill them wherever you find them.'

Proximal Indicators

Code	Notes
PI1: Pathway	
Present	<p>The POI engaged in pathway behaviours relating to both the synagogue and other threatened actions of violence. In terms of the former, the POI had been researching the synagogue on its website. While it is possible that this was for the purpose of simply sending a DCT, given his other preparation behaviours it is also reasonable to see this as research behaviour. In the latter category of behaviours, the POI told an online contact that he had been ‘practicing and playing out’ a plan to stab a 16-year-old student that the POI knew.</p> <p>The POI had also written a number of notes detailing a plan to ‘Kill as many Aussie dogs as possible’ in a knife attack on the MCG. Finally, the POI had collected a number of weapons over time. These included a folding pocketknife, as well as two larger machetes.</p>
PI2: Fixation	
Present	<p>After the 2021 incident, the POI’s fixation with IS and violence seemed to intensify to the point he has written a number of attack planning notes in the name of IS. His threats also indicate a strong interest in the commission of violence. The POI has also made extensive attempts to stay connected to online spaces, despite the efforts of his parents in restricting his access. The POI’s fixation has also corresponded with a decline in his social life. The most obvious evidence for this decline is the repeated behaviour which has resulted in difficulties at school, including an incident where he brought a concealed knife to school in his pants.</p>

PI3: Identification	
Present	The POI has clearly developed a pseudocommando identity, created around the image of himself as a fighter for IS. He has demonstrated this in his online posting, where he has uploaded a number of images and videos of himself posing with his knives and machetes, often wearing a hoodie with his face covered. In one of these videos, he swore a bay'ah to IS. Additionally, the POI has identified himself as an agent of Islamic State.
PI4: Novel Aggression	
Absent	There is no evidence of the POI engaging in novel aggression. This does not mean the POI has not been violent - his conduct while in remand is evidence of this. However, this violence seems to be related to his interactions with Corrections staff, and not as a testing of his own capacity.
PI5: Energy Burst	
Present	The POI's behaviour seems to have intensified in April 2025 and continued into May, culminating in his arrest. The observed behaviour begins in April with the purchase of several weapons, more frequent posting of extremist material online, engaging in attack planning (including with others online), and then culminating in the direct threat sent on 21 May. It is possible that this behaviour is not actually significantly different from his baseline (particularly some of the posting) and is merely what is captured by available evidence.
PI6: Leakage	
Present	The POI engaged in leakage when he communicated to his online contact called the 'sheikh'. The POI told this individual about his plan to stab a 16-year-old girl at his school and also told him about his plans to communicate fake attack threats. After his arrest, the POI also indicated to Youth Justice staff that he felt that the only way to end his fixation on his previous case manager was to 'kill her'.

PI7: Last Resort	
Absent	There is no particular evidence of a strong last resort imperative.
PI8: Directly Communicated Threat	
Present	The POI engaged in a direct threat when he sent the message to the synagogue.

■ Discussion

The POI exhibits six (out of eight) proximal warning behaviours, necessitating active threat management regardless of the individual's age. While facets of ASD are likely contributing to the POI's behaviour, this does not exclude or negate the potential threat to public safety. In assessing this young person, practitioners must disentangle the fantasy elements of his ASD from the tangible pathway behaviours that signal an increased intent and capacity for violence.

The POI's *Pathway* and *Fixation* indicators are complicated by his autism. While potentially representing (at least initially) a circumscribed interest that also fulfilled a coping mechanism in the context of bullying victimisation, the POI appears to have progressed from intense, focused interest towards attack preparation. His acquisition of bladed weapons, combined with his practicing and playing out of a stabbing plan against a specific peer suggest a transition from abstract fascination to concrete tactical rehearsals.

As a young person with ASD who experienced significant bullying and social isolation, *Identification* with extremism likely provided a ready-made social script and a sense of power that became an important, albeit problematic, coping mechanism in his life. His identification was likely inadvertently reinforced by the 2021 undercover operation, where he received positive social feedback from someone he may have perceived as a role model. While the POI's age and autism were specific vulnerabilities that may have led him to adopt a pseudocommando identity as a way of securing the social connection and approval he lacked, he has maintained and strengthened this identity over time, with it increasingly framing his sense of self.

While some of the POI's behaviours have been chronic (such as posting material), the purchase of weapons and making direct threats specifically targeting a synagogue constitute an *Energy Burst* during April/May 2025. Perceived injustices may have served as a catalyst for his transition to active planning. In young people with ASD, *Leakage* may represent a tactic to gain attention or an unfiltered expression of internal fixation. However, the POI's shift from general IS rhetoric to naming a specific 16-year-old student and a former case manager indicates that his leakage has become highly personal, potentially increasing the threat.

The POI's *Directly Communicated Threat* to the synagogue and school, sent under the pseudonym Adolf Hitler, may demonstrate a lack of cognitive complexity, or a sense of enjoyment gained from being provocative. While this may be viewed as ideological incoherence, the presence of physical weapons and tactical research suggests the POI's threats can be credible even if the motivational framework is immature or unimportant to the POI. When assessing young people with autism, fantasy and intent are not mutually exclusive. A preoccupation that begins as a strategy for social acceptance (pushing away bullies) can evolve into a genuine pathway to violence.

■ Distal Characteristics

Code	Notes
DC1: Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage	
Present	The POI has a history of being bullied at school, resulting in him being an isolated child without friends. His mother suggested that he became interested in VE after his bullies once said that he 'can be a good terrorist one day'. The POI was also heavily impacted by his arrest in 2021 and its consequences, including the POI being refused entry to Singapore. Given his expressed dream was to travel the world, this was a significant setback and left him aggrieved.

DC2: Framed by an Ideology	
Present	The POI has articulated his views in an explicit Salafist-Jihadist framing, particularly aligned with IS. Beyond his long-term consumption of IS material, he swore a bay'ah to IS and made threats on behalf of the Caliph. He has also used specific Quranic verses to justify his actions, such as citing Quran 9:5 in a note that read 'Kill them wherever you find them'. The POI also has articulated his views in an explicitly anti-Semitic manner, targeting Jewish organisations and citing Hitler as a great man -because of their shared hatred of Jews.
DC3: Failure to affiliate with an Extremist or Other Group	
Absent	The POI does not seem to have failed to affiliate. Instead, he has seemingly contacted individuals online.
DC4: Dependence on the Virtual Community	
Present	The POI extensively used online spaces for the reinforcement of his beliefs and socialising in extremist spaces.
DC5: Thwarting of Occupational Goals	
Present	Initially, around 2021, the POI's IQ was reassessed by the school, changing from an assessment of 56 to 71. This disqualified him for the one-on-one support he previously had, representing a significant setback in his schooling. Finally, the POI had been excluded from attending school in person after he brought a knife to school.

DC6: Changes in Thinking and Emotion	
Present	The POI's thinking and intensity of emotion has shifted over time. In 2021, a psychologist described the POI's ideation as a 'shock tactic' related to his social isolation. However, by 2025, it was noted that his behaviour had become 'defensive' and that his level of intent was increased. His language also gives evidence of a shift in intensity, with the POI specifically targeting Jewish people with slurs, such as 'poison Jews', 'fucking venom', the 'Jewish disease'. His language also includes constant racist, sexist, and homophobic comments in custody. It is possible that this is not a significant shift and his earlier language and thinking included these views. They are, however, significantly more evident now.
DC7: Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding	
Present	While this is difficult to determine from the evidence available (particularly since most of the POI's offending has occurred before he was 18), it can be assessed that given the POI's intense history of social isolation, bullying at school, and threats/references to sexualised violence and homophobia, the POI has not successfully pair bonded. This is a weak observation, but a reasonable assessment (particularly given that in his adult life, he has only been in custody).
DC8: Mental Disorder	
Present	The POI has been assessed with having ASD, ADHD, and Oppositional Defiance Disorder. He has also been assessed as having some degree of cognitive impairment and has been diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability.
DC9: Creativity and Innovation	
Absent	There is no specific evidence of this.
DC10: History of Criminal Violence	
Absent	The POI has no previously recorded criminal history of violence.

Discussion

The distal characteristics of the POI provide a foundation for understanding the developmental trajectory that led to his warning behaviours. The POI has seven (out of ten) distal characteristics, including *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage*, *Framed by an Ideology*, and *Changes in Thinking and Emotion*, which appear more likely to co-occur with proximal warning behaviours.³⁶ Overall, the distal characteristics highlight that the POI is having multiple needs being met in problematic ways, with threat mitigation strategies potentially able to focus on meeting these needs in more pro-social ways.

The POI has a history of chronic school bullying where peers taunted him with labels like 'Osama bin Laden' or 'terrorist'. For this POI, who also has ASD, this likely contributed to the development of a bridge between his internal needs (such as wanting to feel safe, powerful, or noticed) and his adopting of the extremist character to provide a sense of mastery and identity in the face of victimisation. His inability to navigate his complex social reality may have contributed to him adopting the rigid, pre-existing models of thinking and behaviour encapsulated by the identity of 'IS operative' or 'mujahid'. The emerging *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* was likely compounded by the 2021 undercover operation and his subsequent deportation from Singapore, which negatively impacted his ambitions to travel. As a minor, he lacked the skills and agency to navigate these setbacks, likely pushing him toward extremist narratives as a way to restore a sense of order and safety.

This personal distress became increasingly *Framed by Ideology* as the POI sought, and believed he found, belonging within a Salafist-Jihadist framework. This process parallels a common developmental need for young people to question society and find their role within it, a search for identity that can make

them vulnerable to extremist influence. His exposure to Islamic State (IS) rhetoric provided a structured worldview that possibly helped to make sense of his experiences, eventually also exposing him to virulent anti-Semitism. This ideological framing was reinforced by his *Dependence on the Virtual Community*. Lacking pro-social connections in the physical world, the POI turned to extremist forums for social identity and reinforcement, where his need for belonging almost entirely replaced meaningful engagement with his family and further negatively impacted his already limited engagement in society.

The loss of his one-on-one teacher's aide, combined with multiple school suspensions and his eventual exclusion from in-person classes, removed other pro-social structures in his life and contributed to *Thwarting of Occupational Goals*. These events likely connect to his *Changes in Thinking and Emotion*, where his level of violent intent shifted from seeking attention to becoming 'defensive' and targeted.

The POI's *Mental Disorder*, specifically the intersection of ASD, ADHD, and ODD, can also be viewed through the lens of his adolescent development. His difficulties with emotional regulation and social integration shape his fixation with a taboo and socially provocative topic, becoming focused and all-consuming. The lack of *Sexually Intimate Pair-Bonding* is a distal factor less relevant for young people who generally lack stability in this area, yet the POI's history of sexually aggressive and violent rhetoric may have made IS messaging regarding the availability of young women in the afterlife appealing to his emerging adolescent sexuality. While he lacks *Creativity and Innovation* and a *History of Criminal Violence*, his tendency to strictly follow instructions provided by influential figures suggests he is highly suggestible. Ultimately, his distal profile depicts an adolescent whose search for independence and belonging has been subverted and shaped by an extremist framework that offered him the solutions his real-world environment could not.

Contextualising the Case Studies

These examples of Australian cases were selected to provide an overview of the kinds of threats posed by young people and how the TRAP-18 can be used to assess them. This section places the case studies into the context of the report's earlier findings.

■ Pathway

As noted in the findings section, 71.8% of young people in the dataset demonstrated *Pathway* behaviours. One of the issues raised was determining when a young person was engaging in actual preparation for a potential violent attack, or when they were instead engaging in collecting behaviours (or indeed, whether these are separate outcomes). Case Studies 1 and 5 present a typical example of *Pathway* behaviour, with the POI engaging in relatively sophisticated physical actions to prepare for an attack, whereas Case Study 3 presents the opposite, with the POI collecting bomb-making materials but *Pathway* being found to be absent. The contrast between these cases illustrates how *Pathway* behaviour (and indeed, all TRAP-18 items) require the assessor to look at patterns of behaviour rather than items being treated as discrete variables.³⁷

■ Fixation

The findings highlight that *Fixation* is particularly difficult to code in young people because establishing a social baseline is potentially harder, often because it is challenging to determine whether isolation caused a fixation or a fixation caused the isolation, particularly when the two can be mutually reinforcing. Case Study 5 is the strongest illustration of this, with the POI's fixation on IS and violence developing directly alongside his social isolation as a result of chronic bullying, making the direction of causation unclear. Case

Study 4 illustrates the inverse point from the findings: that *Fixation* can, in group-based actors, become a socially connecting thread rather than a cause of decline. Despite collecting ideological material and spending time in violent extremist spaces, the POI showed no clear *Fixation*. This is consistent with the findings' observation that group actors had proportionally lower rates of *Fixation*. This case also demonstrates some of the challenges of using TRAP-18 when a POI's social context is supportive of violent extremism, rather than being opposed to it. Items like *Fixation* assume an environment where a fixated individual's views cause social degradation, rather than the adoption and intense focus on these views serving to draw individuals together. However, as explained in the discussion of that case study, the fact that only a single indicator is present does not necessarily increase or decrease the level of concern.³⁸ Rather, it gives the assessor a sense of the POI's level of involvement in a potential act of violence, and what psychological and logistical processes the POI has gone through (or not).

■ Leakage and Directly Communicated Threat

Leakage (51.4% in those 18 and under group versus 35.1% in the 19–25 group) and *Directly Communicated Threat* (27% versus 6.4%) were identified in the findings as the two items with the single largest age-based differences in the entire dataset. Both of these differences can be explained through the need to be performative. As noted earlier, younger people's violence tends to be identity-driven and, because of this, needs to be communicated. Case Study 1 exemplifies performative *Leakage*: telling a contact he was 'very busy', meeting others in heaven as a martyr, and otherwise posting his extremist views on social media, seem less to be operational carelessness and more as pride in his new warrior identity. Case Study 5 illustrates both *Leakage* and *Directly Communicated Threat* as being identity-expressive acts tied into the POI's

internal fantasies. Similarly, Case Study 2 demonstrated Leakage in the context of someone whose *Fixation* is less around ideological motives, and more around violence and self-harm.

Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage, and the Role of Identity

As noted in the findings, 100% of the 18 and under cohort with *Personal Grievance or Moral Outrage* also displayed *Identification* behaviour, and that individuals with a *Personal Grievance* were four times more likely to be *Fixated*. The findings also note that some younger people were observed to display *Identification* and *Pathway* behaviour without any observable grievance, driven instead by aesthetic attraction to extremist identities. Case Study 1 illustrates the grievance-to-identification pathway clearly: his moral outrage at the Syrian conflict, reinforced when the school forced him to shave his beard, directly channelled his *Identification* toward IS. Case Study 5 illustrates the same pathway but with chronic bullying as the fuel, a more personal grievance that was compounded further by his arrest and deportation from Singapore. Case Study 2 demonstrates how *Personal Grievance* alone can serve as the motivation for engaging in a potential act of violence, with the POI's dismay at his place in the world leading to an *Identification* with mass killers and a personal identity build around the idea of conducting mass violence. Case Study 3 is an example of the opposite dynamic: the POI displayed no personal grievance or moral outrage whatsoever, and no ideological framing either, yet was drawn to extremist material for entirely non-ideological reasons. She directly illustrates the findings' argument that younger people can be attracted to extremist material through aesthetic appeal alone.

■ Dependence on the Virtual Community

Dependence on the Virtual Community was observed in 81.1% of the 14 to 18 age cohort and 70.2% of the 19-25 cohort. This item has effectively replaced the need for physical group affiliation for most young people. As noted in the findings, this does not mean the item is not useful and assessors should use this item to ask why someone depends on online communities and what needs it fulfils. All of the case studies show dependence on online spaces, but in meaningfully different ways. For Case Study 1, online spaces provided ideological instruction and an operational handler. For Case Study 4, they provided a level of ideological exposure that allowed the POI to act within his brother's orbit. For Case Study 3, online spaces were a conduit for her restricted interest in music and inadvertent exposure to extremist material. In Case Studies 5 and 2, online spaces were an important space to exercise and develop their social identity around prior mass murderers and other perpetrators of extreme violence. This spectrum of engagement and the quality and function of that engagement is what matters most for case formulation.

■ Lone Actors versus Group Actors


The statistical findings show that lone actors had significantly higher total, proximal, and distal TRAP-18 scores than group actors. Case Study 4 demonstrates this well, with the low item count, one proximal indicator, and three distal characteristics, reflecting what the data suggests about group actors: their involvement is often shaped by social dynamics rather than individual pathology, which produces a flatter TRAP-18 profile (in terms of item count). However, as noted earlier, the number of items present is less important than how these items relate to each other. This means that while TRAP-18 may be more directed towards assessing lone actors, with care, it remains applicable and useful to assess the threat posed by group-based actors as well.

■ The Case Studies as a Spectrum

Viewed together, the five case studies form a spectrum that spans the range of ways in which TRAP-18 can be applied to young people. Case Studies 1, 2, and 5 represent high-level threats in which the tool functions broadly as intended, though both require developmental interpretation to code accurately. Case Study 4 shows how social drift and group context can produce a low indicator count that can mask real danger, illustrating and reinforcing the risk of 'score-counting'. Case Study 3 shows a young person who barely registers on TRAP-18 at all yet was formally charged with terrorism offences. These five cases help demonstrate that TRAP-18 is useful when assessing young people, but that assessors must consider every indicator through a developmental lens, with the potential for alternative explanations for the behaviour. However, these developmental considerations need to be balanced with a recognition that age is not necessarily a barrier to committing targeted violence.

6

Conclusion



The research indicates that the TRAP-18 is a suitable protocol for assessing the threat of young people engaging in violent extremism in Australia. The study confirms that while the protocol's core behavioural indicators are applicable, they require contextual interpretation that accounts for the developmental realities of adolescence and emerging adulthood.

The radicalisation of adolescents is deeply intertwined with the developmental search for identity, characterised by highly performative behaviours and a reliance on virtual communities that often substitute for physical extremist ties. This 'noisy' communication style, driven by a need for social recognition and the 'trying on' of extremist personas, provides critical opportunities for early detection through observing *Leakage* and *Directly Communicated Threats*. Because young people are often motivated by aesthetic attraction and a desire for belonging rather than deep-seated ideological commitment, their path toward violence is frequently a byproduct of cognitive immaturity and a heightened sensitivity to perceived injustices. The report findings suggest that the TRAP-18 is applicable to the different ways that young people have engaged in violent extremism.

Ultimately, to effectively assess threat in young people, practitioners should account for the unique characteristics and circumstances that come with being a young person.

Appendices

Appendix 1: References

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Appendix 2: Endnotes

- 1) Burgess, 'Director-General's Annual Threat Assessment 2025'; 'A Safer Australia | Australia's Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy 2025'.
- 2) A Safer Australia: Australia's Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy 2025.
- 3) Meloy, 'TRAP-18 User's Manual Version 1.0', 7.
- 4) Allely et al., 'The Application of the Path to Intended Violence Model and the TRAP-18 in the Case of the Christchurch Mosque Shooter'; Collins and Clark, 'Using the TRAP-18 to Identify an Incel Lone-Actor Terrorist'; Meloy and Holzer, 'Threat Assessment'; Tassin and Allely, 'Application of the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18) to the Case of the Army-Navy Recruiting Center Attacker in Little Rock, Arkansas'; Iardi et al., 'The 2019 Christchurch Terror Attack'.
- 5) Kupper and Meloy, 'TRAP-18 Indicators Validated Through the Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Targeted Violence Manifestos'; Böckler et al., 'Islamist Terrorists in Germany and Their Warning Behaviors: A Comparative Assessment of Attackers and Other Convicts Using the TRAP-18'; Meloy et al., 'Some TRAP-18 Indicators Discriminate between Terrorist Attackers and Other Subjects of National Security Concern.'; Brugh et al., 'Application of the TRAP-18 Framework to U.S. and Western European Lone Actor Terrorists'; Allely and Wicks, 'The Feasibility and Utility of the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18)'; Brugh et al., 'Application of the TRAP-18 Framework to U.S. and Western European Lone Actor Terrorists'; Challacombe and Lucas, 'Postdicting Violence with Sovereign Citizen Actors: An Exploratory Test of the TRAP-18.'; Goodwill and Meloy, 'Visualizing the Relationship among Indicators for Lone Actor Terrorist Attacks: Multidimensional Scaling and the TRAP-18'; Guldemann and Meloy, 'Assessing the Threat of Lone-Actor Terrorism: The Reliability and Validity of the TRAP-18'.
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Brugh et al., Application of the TRAP-18 Framework to U.S. and Western European Lone Actor Terrorists
Allely and Wicks, The Feasibility and Utility of the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18
- 6) Corner and Pyszora, 'The Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol-18 (TRAP-18) in Australia'.
- 7) Meloy and Gill, 'The Lone-Actor Terrorist and the TRAP-18.'
- 8) Collins and Clark, 'Using the TRAP-18 to Identify an Incel Lone-Actor Terrorist.'
- 9) The threshold for inclusion being charged with an offence is suitable as this project is

concerned with observed behaviours, rather than the legalistic import of these behaviours. Put differently, we measure what has happened – as evidenced through charges brought against an individual – rather than legal outcomes.

10) Version 2 of the TRAP-18 User Handbook was used with the permission of the TRAP-18 creator and owner, Dr. Reid Meloy. Version 2 of the handbook is largely an update of the written descriptions of the TRAP-18 items, as well as additional information and guidance around case formulation for managing individuals displaying concerning behaviour. Most relevant to this project are minor changes to some of the TRAP-18 items, including clarification around coding the Failure of Sexually Intimate Pair Bonding distal characteristic, clarification around coding the Mental Disorder distal characteristic, and clarification around coding the Dependence on the Virtual Community distal characteristic. When relevant, these changes will be referred to in the contextual analysis section of this project.

11) Internally, coding also featured a ‘not observed’ outcome. This was purely for internal purposes and is treated as being the same as an unknown outcome.

12) Spaaij, ‘The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism’.

13) Those diagnosed with personality disorders were all over 18, as required by the diagnostic criteria.

14) Four individuals had both ASD and ADHD.

15) Dillon, ‘Collecting as Routine Human Behavior’.

16) Lekies, Everyone Needs a Rock: Collecting Items from Nature in Childhood.

17) Vargen and Challacombe, ‘Violence Risk Assessment of Sovereign Citizens’,
13. Violence Risk Assessment of Sovereign Citizens
13.,”plainCitation”:”Vargen and Challacombe, ‘Violence Risk Assessment of Sovereign Citizens’,
13.,”noteIndex”:16},”citationItems”:[{”id”:4464,”uris”:[”http://zotero.org/users/14279021/items/3J3AUFPU”],”itemData”:{”id”:4464,”type”:”article-journal”,”abstract”:”Sovereign Citizens
comprise an understudied right-wing extremist movement in the United States who have grown
in notoriety in recent years due to several high-profile instances of violence. Despite this, little
empirical research has been conducted on Sovereign Citizens, including research on assessing
their risk for violence. In this study, we sought to replicate and extend a prior study on Sovereign
Citizen violence. Using open-source data, we added several new cases to a pre-existing dataset
of violent and non-violent Sovereign Citizen incidents, yielding a total sample of 107 cases, 69
of which were scored using the HCR-20V3, and 83 of which were scored using the TRAP18. Our
findings indicated that higher scores on both instruments were significantly associated with
greater odds of cases being violent. We also observed that several risk factors occurred with
significantly more frequency among violent cases than non-violent ones. Implications for future

research and professional practice are discussed.”,”container-title”:”Behavioral Sciences & the Law”,”DOI”:”10.1002/bsl.2607”,”ISSN”:”0735-3936, 1099-0798”,”issue”:”2-3”,”journalAbbreviation”:”Behavioral Sci & The Law”,”language”:”en”,”page”:”55-77”,”source”:”DOI.org (Crossref

18) This is not to say that this 44% would have gone on to conduct an attack; rather, it is impossible to say either way. Based on the available evidence, some of these threats were backed up by relatively developed Pathway behaviours, suggesting that these threats were more than simply ‘trolling’.

19) There is one individual who was an exception to this who travelled overseas instead.

20) This item received an update in Version 2 of the TRAP-18 manual. Previously, it was personal grievance and moral outrage. Now, either personal grievance or moral outrage is acceptable.

21) Meloy and Gill, ‘The Lone-Actor Terrorist and the TRAP-18.’

22) Meloy and Gill, ‘The Lone-Actor Terrorist and the TRAP-18.’; Meloy et al., ‘Some TRAP-18 Indicators Discriminate between Terrorist Attackers and Other Subjects of National Security Concern.’

23) Meloy, ‘TRAP-18 User’s Manual Version 2.0’, 53.

24) Meloy, ‘TRAP-18 User’s Manual Version 2.0’, 55.

25) Kasturi et al., ‘Prevalence Rates of Depression and Anxiety among Young Rural and Urban Australians’.

26) Collins, ‘Micro-Sociology of Mass Rampage Killings’.

27) Al-Attar, ‘Autism Spectrum Disorders and Terrorism’.

28) Al-Attar, ‘Interviewing Terrorism Suspects and Offenders with an Autism Spectrum Disorder’; Al-Attar, Extremism, Radicalisation & Mental Health: Handbook for Practitioners.”plainCitation”:”Al-Attar, ‘Interviewing Terrorism Suspects and Offenders with an Autism Spectrum Disorder’; Al-Attar, Extremism, Radicalisation & Mental Health: Handbook for Practitioners.”,”noteIndex”:27},”citationItems”:[{“id”:4519,”uris”:[“http://zotero.org/users/14279021/items/PZ878KGJ”],”itemData”:{“id”:4519,”type”:”article-journal”,”abstract”:”Autistic individuals charged or convicted with terrorism offences face a range of unique challenges during a forensic interview, which are firstly borne out of their autistic functioning and secondly which are generated by the nuances of terrorist offences and the complex information commonly required by interviewers in relation to such offences and the pathways that led to them. To assist interviewers to understand the

range of such challenges, a brief summary of the complexities of terrorist legislation in the UK is provided followed by an examination of seven facets of autism that may impact the interview style and content. The potential implications of each of the seven facets of autism for the terrorism interview will be highlighted, and a hypothetical case study will be presented to illustrate such implications. The medico-legal and ethical ramifications of making terrorism interviews responsive to the interviewee's autistic functioning are considered throughout. Finally, recommendations are generated to guide forensic interviewers working with autistic terrorist suspects and offenders.”,”container-title”:”International Journal of Forensic Mental Health”,”DOI”:”10.1080/14999013.2018.1519614”,”ISSN”:”1499-9013, 1932-9903”,”issue”:”4”,”journalAbbreviation”:”International Journal of Forensic Mental Health”,”language”:”en”,”page”:”321-337”,”source”:”DOI.org (Crossref

29) Al-Attar, ‘Autism Spectrum Disorders and Terrorism’, 931.

30) Meloy and Gill, ‘The Lone-Actor Terrorist and the TRAP-18.’; Meloy et al., ‘Some TRAP-18 Indicators Discriminate between Terrorist Attackers and Other Subjects of National Security Concern.’

31) Lankford and Hoover, ‘Do the Ages of Mass Shooters Matter?’

32) It was sometimes difficult to determine whether a particular incident of violence was instrumental/predatory or reactive in nature. The coders erred on the side of inclusion and unless there was evidence that a particular incident was reactive in nature (i.e. a young person being targeted by bullies), it was included as being present for this item.

33) Meloy et al., ‘Investigating the Individual Terrorist in Europe.’; Meloy et al., ‘Some TRAP-18 Indicators Discriminate between Terrorist Attackers and Other Subjects of National Security Concern.’”plainCitation”:”Meloy et al., ‘Investigating the Individual Terrorist in Europe.’; Meloy et al., ‘Some TRAP-18 Indicators Discriminate between Terrorist Attackers and Other Subjects of National Security Concern.’”,”noteIndex”:32,”citationItems”:[{“id”:586,”uris”:[“http://zotero.org/users/14279021/items/D8GKUJQL”],”itemData”:{“id”:586,”type”:”article-journal”,”abstract”:”The Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18

34) Al-Attar, ‘Autism Spectrum Disorders and Terrorism’.

35) Meloy, ‘TRAP-18 User’s Manual Version 2.0’, 61.

36) Meloy, ‘TRAP-18 User’s Manual Version 2.0’, 45.

37) Meloy, ‘TRAP-18 User’s Manual Version 2.0’, 11.

38) Indeed, as noted in the TRAP-18 manual, the presence of any proximal warning behaviours should result in active management. Meloy, ‘TRAP-18 User’s Manual Version 2.0’, 10.

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